

EDELFRIDA,

NOVEL

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. HOOKHAM AND J. CARPENTER,
OLD AND NEW BOND STREET.

M.DCC.XCII.

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PRINTED FOR J. CARPENTIER,
OLD



EDELFRIDA.

CHAP. XXXIX.

WHEN Edelfrida waited on Miss Montague the next morning, at the hour appointed, that lady condescended to receive her with a gracious and encouraging smile; the task of dressing for breakfast was performed with very little trouble on both sides. Edelfrida then, eager to shew her gratitude for this kindness by her diligence to oblige in turn, begged Miss Montague would employ her with some work till she again required her attendance to dress for dinner. “I have just begun a gown in embroidery

“on muslin,” said that lady, “and I wish to finish it against a season of festivity which is approaching, amongst some friends and relations of mine, if you think you could assist me I will give you part of it.”—“Yes, Ma’am,” replied Edelfrida, pleased with an opportunity of shewing her mistress that she was not wholly useless, or destitute of taste and skill in that work, “Yes, Ma’am, I think I can undertake to follow your instructions; I have done a good deal of embroidery at different times.” Miss Montague then unlocked a box, in which her work was packed up, and taking out the only finished breadth, she gave it to Edelfrida as a pattern to copy, along with another breadth ready drawn, with the necessary silks, and directed her where to find a proper frame; it was a border of small natural flowers well fancied and arranged, and had, when done, a very elegant effect. Edelfrida then joined the party in the housekeeper’s room at break-

fast, after which, having got the frame carried into her own apartment, she fixed her work in it, and being as expeditious as skilful in the performance of it, she made a surprising progress during the morning. Miss Montague, when she came to dress for dinner, was astonished at the quantity she had done, and delighted with the beauty and delicacy of the work. "I fear, Lucy," said she, "my performance will never match with your's, so that by doing it so much better, you have drawn the whole upon yourself; yet I would not have you be too diligent, it may injure your health; I, therefore, insist upon it, whether my gown is finished or not, that you allow yourself necessary relaxation."—Thus did she win the heart of her lovely attendant, whose pride was to be subdued by kindness at all times, though never by harshness or insult. From this time, then, Edelfrida resolved on finishing the gown, if she rose two or three hours earlier every

morning ; and so much did it employ her mind as well as fingers, that she had no leisure to reflect on the griefs which had marked the last twelve months of her life, for it was now that time since she lost all hopes of her father's life, a period from which she might justly date the progress of her misfortunes. She was not yet eighteen, and had tasted the various sweets of love, friendship, and dissipation, admiration, and fashion, together with the evils of insult, injustice, persecution, desertion, and the pain of feeling herself wrong in some instances, though criminal in none ; she had blazed for a moment in the brilliant circle of high life, she was now lost to all her former occupations, in the borrowed character of a lady's maid ; but to her credit, though the vicissitudes of her fortune had saddened her heart, they had not infused the least tincture of acidity into her temper ; warm and indignant by nature, she still continued so, when occasion roused her angry spirit,

but

but it was short-lived as quick, unless provoked to scorn and contempt, then ever humble ; but treat her kindly, and her heart was open to view, her gratitude unbounded, her mind gentle as the summer breeze, and her benevolence as diffusive as the light of heaven, and had she possessed the ability, her charity would have exceeded prudence by many degrees, for to the cry of distress or to the tear of sorrow, she lent a willing and sympathetic attention ; neither vanity, gaiety, admiration, nor yet poverty, could close those avenues through which the compassion of her soul constantly flowed ; so that, though by no means a perfect character, she had virtues which atoned for her faults, and beauty and sweetness, which rendered even those faults more captivating than the lukewarm qualities of the many who pass blameless through life, because their minds have no energy, their hearts no affections, no passions, to lead them beyond the rigid line of cold

propriety : those who have gloriously conquered the ardor of affection when ill-directed, have vanquished passions which deform nature and destroy reason, have a claim to praise and admiration which none can dispute, but all must approve ; amongst such, however, the most partial friends Edelfrida possessed, could not mark her. In the course of three weeks the gown was completed, so much to Miss Montague's satisfaction, that when she sent to town for some new things she wanted against the time she had mentioned, she ordered a very handsome summer bonnet and cloke for Edelfrida, having observed that those she wore on Sundays to church were growing shabby ; this present was very acceptable to her, though when first she received it, she felt her cheek glow with something, like that proud warmth she had formerly experienced ; her acknowledgments were, however, gracefully respectful, and full of gratitude, for she instantly recollected how
ill

ill it would agree with her condition to reject the generosity of her mistress. "Lucy," said Miss Montague one morning as she was dressing, "I am going in the course of a week with Lord and Lady Walton, to spend some time with my relations; our first visit will be to the Marquis of Armington's, and from thence we shall proceed a large party to Osmond Castle, where the birth day of Lord Osmond is to be celebrated very soon after—so that it will be necessary, both for yourself and me, to make provision for a long absence from home; you will, therefore, take care that all my cloaths are made ready, and if you want money to equip yourself with any thing, now pray make no scruple of telling me."

At the mention of Lord Osmond, though she knew not why, except that affair with Mandiville, Edelfrida felt a sensation of no very tranquil nature, and she could scarcely attend to what Miss

Montague said to her afterwards; she did, however, recollect herself to reply with thanks for the offer of money, and a promise of obedience to the instructions. During the week previous to their departure from Walton Park, Edelfrida was very much employed, for she would not suffer any person to assist her in making up whatever Miss Montague might want for her intended excursion. Mrs. Mansel jocularly charged her to make herself smart for the occasion, for that there would be something like high life below stairs, on my Lord's birth day, she expected. "We used to think, Mrs. Lucy, " that Lord Osmond and your Lady " would make a nice pair; they are first " cousins already, but I do not know how " it is, though they appeared great friends " when they met in London, on Miss " Montague's return to England, I heard " the Ladies maids talk, as if his Lord- " ship had met with some disappointment " in love, and from being a very sprightly " youth,

“ youth, was become very melancholy
 “ and low-spirited; some of the servants
 “ said, they supposed it was because his
 “ uncle, of whom he was very fond, died
 “ suddenly, but others thought differ-
 “ rently; so who was right, or who was
 “ wrong, I cannot say; but we shall see
 “ presently, for if the old gentleman’s
 “ death caused the alteration in him, he
 “ will recover that, no doubt, in time;
 “ but if love has been so cruel to disap-
 “ point him, one does not know when
 “ he may get the better of it—does one,
 “ Mr. Evans? for I conclude you have
 “ been in love in your day as well as
 “ others.”—“ I am in love at this in-
 “ stant,” cried Mr. Evans, “ though
 “ these white locks shame me, when I
 “ speak of such things; but nevertheless,
 “ my pretty Mrs. Lucy here has contri-
 “ buted to steal my heart.” Edelfrida
 smiled good humouredly on the worthy
 old man, who meant not to offend, but
 rather to chase the air of dejection from

her countenance, which thought always placed there, and which Mrs. Mansel's discourse had now called forth; this person, not unnaturally, loved talking, and was consequently communicative; she generally made Mrs. Williams and Mr. Evans, as wife as herself, by repeating the anecdotes she picked up in her frequent excursions with her Lady; they had more discretion, and were not therefore always pleased with her want of it; but upon the whole, she was a well-meaning woman, who intended no injury to any one, so that if they blamed her in their own minds sometimes, they readily allowed her due merit at others, and were frequently diverted with her little histories, which were never ill-naturedly told. What she now said, by way of enlivening Edelfrida, whom she frequently observed, "was a very grave woman, and she "feared, out of health," though well intended, served to renew painful ideas, which, having finished her work, she took
 " a soli-

a solitary work to indulge. "I am going," said she, mentally, "into a scene of gaiety and pleasure, which neither in my own, or my borrowed character, I am to partake; excluded from the sphere in which till now I have moved, my pride will not suffer me to join in the vulgar and indelicate festivity of those who appear my equals: shall I condescend to mix with footmen and grooms, who feel myself offended by the familiar, though civil address of those petty gentlemen, who ape the manners of their superiors, not unsuccessfully sometimes? No, rather let me be for ever deaf to the sound of mirth or joy, than degrade myself by such unnecessary humiliation; my poverty and my misfortunes shall never reduce me to a level with those who inherit no sense of propriety: abject as my condition may yet be, my mind shall retain its native habits; I will be still in sentiment, though not in situation—Edel-
frida Dudley."

As the day for quitting Walton Park approached, every person in the family, of that number who were to attend upon this excursion, were overjoyed, except Edelfrida, and she became more and more sad of heart; she dreaded the idea of encountering any of those acquaintance she had so lately joined company with in London; she sickened at the prospect of riot and dissipation, though so lately the latter had been almost all her business in life, and she resolved, that since she must leave the peaceful retirement she enjoyed at Walton Park, she would, as much as possible, shut herself up in her room, wherever she was, nor endure the fatiguing impertinence of affectation amongst that class of domestics which she ranked in, for which they are too remarkable; her patience would not brook the disgusting flippancy of plebeian ignorance, nor the saucy pertness of waiting gentlewomen, who poorly imitate the follies of their mistresses, never copy their virtues

or

or good qualities; with such she determined against associating, even if she passed the lonely hours in solitude and silence, while every other individual danced the giddy round of pleasure. The evening previous to the appointed day for setting out to Barnly Manor, the seat of the Marquis of Armington, Edelfrida was fully engaged in packing up trunks and band-boxes, in which Mrs. Williams greatly assisted her; yet, notwithstanding she felt herself universally fatigued, before the hour for bed arrived, and happy it was for her, as to this general weariness of body she was indebted for the rest which enabled her to rise next morning with spirits, to support herself through the day, which she considered as the prelude to mortification. Miss Montague, who was herself in high spirits, and who could not guess why Edelfrida should be otherwise, observing her dejected and pale countenance, kindly expressed a fear that she was not well, and begged, if that was the case,
that

that she would remain with her aunt till she had got the better of her indisposition, and follow her; for that however inconvenient it might be to her to go without her maid, she could not be easy to take her if she was ill. Edelfrida scorned to use the generosity which would have spared her, unworthily, by pretending indisposition, thanked her Lady, but declared, “it was only a slight headach of which she could complain, and that would go off.” Lord and Lady Walton then, with Miss Montague, travelled in the coach together, Mrs. Mansel and Edelfrida in a post-chaise with the baggage, and the men servants on horseback; and in this order, after having taking an affectionate leave of Mrs. Williams, and Mr. Evans, Edelfrida bade adieu to Walton Park, with little relish for the amusements Mrs. Mansel promised her on their different visits, and even less inclination to utter a syllable on the journey.

C H A P.

CHAP. XL.

THE cavalcade reached Barnly Manor in the evening of the day on which it left Walton Park ; in order to accomplish which, post-horses were put both to the coach and chaise, after the first stage. The terror of meeting with any person who might recognize her, increased as Edelfrida approached the magnificent seat of the Marquis of Armington, and when she entered it with Mrs. Mansel, her feet would scarcely convey her to the room where the ladies maids were assembled in due order and decorum to receive the strangers, with all the mock ceremony of etiquette, which they could catch from their observations on the real politeness of the families in which they lived. The Marchioness's woman, a native of England,

land, brought up in an inferior station, in one of the provincial convents in France, was intended by her friends for a teacher at an English boarding school, where she was to retail her acquirements, consisting of a tolerable proficiency in needle works, fillagree baskets and boxes, and artificial flowers, bad French, and total ignorance of her mother tongue, even to that vulgar part of it, her god-fathers and god-mothers promised for, or undertook to teach her, when the parish priest made a Christian of her. Such was the lady who, presiding in the lower apartments at Barnly Manor, came forward to receive Mrs. Mansel and Edelfrida, for her better stars prevailing, she had procured a recommendation to the young Marchioness on her marriage, which had lately taken place; a situation she wisely preferred to that destined for her. The Marchioness was of the Catholic church, though daughter and sister to a Protestant Earl. Lady Osmond, her mother, being of that per-

persuasion herself, it had been stipulated at her marriage with the late Lord Osmond, that the daughter should be educated by her, the sons by their father, and this agreement had never been infringed; though when her Ladyship became a widow, she reluctantly yielded her only son to the care of his uncle and guardian, and left England much irritated in her own mind, that General Osmond would not suffer his nephew to accompany her and his sisters, or even to visit them while they remained on the continent. She settled in France for some years, where she contracted an intimacy with Madame de Villeneuve, who afterwards removed into Italy for the improvement of her only son, whose education she herself superintended; Lady Osmond also accompanied her friend, and as the young people of each house grew up, they formed a design of uniting young Villeneuve to one of the Lady Osmonds, in order effectually to prevent either party from contracting

tracting an improper alliance if left to themselves; for this purpose a solemn promise was exchanged between the two mothers, when the Chevalier de Ville-neuf was permitted to travel with a tutor, that either Lady Clara or Lady Julia should be his future wife, which ever on his return appeared most suitable in disposition to him; his mother, who had ever maintained the most absolute sway over his mind, amongst the directions she charged him with on his departure, commanded him to come back to her free from all engagements, for that she had already contracted him; he bowed obedience, never having been in the habit of disputing her pleasure: he appeared a timid youth, endowed with no great share of understanding, and destitute of resolution and spirit. During his absence, Lady Clara the elder, now Marchioness of Armington, a sprightly, good humoured, thoughtless, handsome, young woman, attracted the attention of her country-

man

man the Marquis; he, too, was a Roman Catholic, so that when he felt himself captivated with her beauty and vivacity, there was no objection on either side to their union; and they had not been long acquainted before they were engaged to be married by mutual consent, and with the entire approbation of Lady Osmond. To the celebration of these nuptials, Miss Montague had gone to Italy as a compliment due to her cousin, Lady Clara, and having made a tour with the wedding party, she returned with them to England. Madame de Villeneuve, Lady Osmond's bosom friend and counsellor, and Lady Julia's destined mother-in-law, came also, so that the company at Barnly Manor consisted of the Marquis and Marchioness, the Lord and Lady of the house, Lady Osmond, Lady Julia, Madame de Villeneuve, and some gentlemen who joined them in London, along with Lord Osmond, Lord and Lady Walton and Miss Montague. Edelfrida
 was

was soon made acquainted with most of the particulars relative to the company in the house, by the servants belonging to each. Mrs. Lucas, the Marchioness's woman, talked with great freedom and volubility of her lady. Madame Fripponne, an old French woman, who waited on Lady Osmond, chattered incessantly about her own consequence and the influence she had over the whole family; a pert French girl, who attended Lady Julia, contradicted her every moment to shew her own superiority, and Edelfrida was presently distracted with the noise they made, as well as disgusted with their folly and impertinence; some of the men servants out of livery, too, were of the company, and she dreaded every instant that they would address her with the same easy assurance they used in speaking to the others; she perceived, indeed, that they looked attentively at her, upon which she assumed a most repulsive air of reserve, bordering on disdain; and in order

der to escape from a situation she endured very ill, she requested that Miss Montague's apartment might be shewn to her, for she wished to put her cloaths ready for her in it. Mrs. Mansel, tea being over, offered to accompany her, and, at length, she got away from the hideous crew assembled in Mrs. Lucas's room.

In walking along the gallery which led to the apartments, Edelfrida started as if she heard a footstep or a door open, looking fearfully around her, lest she should be seen, for a consciousness of concealment, made her tremble at the idea of a discovery. When she reached Miss Montague's room, she sat down to recollect with pain, that she had no longer any business with delicacy of sentiment, refinement of manners, or that pride which ill became her present station, yet she could not help shedding a few tears over the grave of her departed happiness. "I must accustom myself," said she, mourn-

mournfully, "to the broad grin unfeel-
 "ing folly wears, and the coarse jests of
 "vulgar mirth; 'tis in vain that I hoped
 "to fly from the companions of my con-
 "dition, they possess not a grain of that
 "feeling intelligence which would instruct
 "them why I seek to be alone; could I
 "I have stayed at Walton Park I should
 "have been content: but thus compelled
 "to mix with wretches who are the very
 "dregs and scum of their different coun-
 "tries, is more than I can submit to pa-
 "tiently." Thus musing on the pecu-
 "liar mortifications of her fortune did she
 sit, till a servant came to tell her supper
 was ready in the steward's room. She
 would have excused herself, but ere she
 could frame a reply, the servant vanished;
 so taking up the light she slowly mea-
 sured back her way to the jovial party
 with whom she was to associate. She
 seated herself between two of the women,
 purposely avoiding all conversation with
 the men, who, though possessed of confi-
 dence

dence for most things, could not conquer a certain awe they felt in her presence; unacquainted with the cause, they yet experienced the effect of that native dignity of mind which shone around her, and repelled the approach of insolence and familiarity. As they chose, in this scene of high life below stairs, to do whatever was done above, these gentlemen's gentlemen invited the ladies to drink wine, an invitation but seldom or slightly refused, except by Edelfrida, who gravely declined every solicitation either to eat or drink, save a small quantity of a dish which was near her, and to which she helped herself, a glass of water during supper, and one of wine afterwards. When the cloth was removed, and those who had impatiently waited for their turn, were retired into the servants hall to regale their appetites and indulge their spleen at the expence of the steward's room, Edelfrida's companions gave a loose to their inclinations, and laughed, talked, and sung, without ceasing;

sing; every one sung a song, whether they could turn a tune or not, and Edelfrida was pressed to follow their example, but she peremptorily refused; the whole set struck with her manner, looked significantly at each other, but presumed not to resume the request. The clock struck twelve, but still there was no summons for the butler to attend with candles, and Edelfrida sat counting the minutes, quite worn out with vexation and fatigue to be kept so long in such a disagreeable situation. At length the bell rang, and the party was broken up for that night to her infinite satisfaction, and she resolved, let their opinion of her be what it might, she would never sup in the steward's room again. She hastened into Miss Montague's room that she might not run the risk of being seen, and she just got there ere her Lady entered, accompanied by the Marchioness and Lady Julia. The first presented to her view a figure gracefully majestic, a countenance animated with

with the most sparkingly vivacity, large black eyes full of fire and spirit, and a complexion of the most clear and beautiful brunette; but all natural bloom was lost in the quantity of rouge which displayed itself on the cheeks of the lovely Marchioness. Lady Julia was very different; her form and features were more exactly beautiful than her sister's; her character, too, appeared all softness and delicacy; her complexion transparent and without art; her eyes blue and full of sweetness and sensibility. These ladies surveyed Edelfrida, the one with a look which said, "I do you honour, or I am
 "determined to gratify my curiosity,
 "whatever your distress or feelings may
 "be;"—the other stole a glance at her, which gently whispered, "I fear to
 "wound you."—Such was the way in which Edelfrida interpreted the different looks of the two sisters; and she afterwards heard the Marchioness say in Miss Montague's ear, "She's quite a divinity,

“Henrietta; where on earth did you pick
 “her up?”—Miss Montague’s reply she
 did not hear, and she had been too often
 told of her beauty to be much surprized
 or elevated by the concurrence of the
 Marchioness in the universal opinion.
 While Miss Montague undressed, the two
 ladies sat and talked to her on indifferent
 subjects; the Marchioness in particular
 said, “Well, Henrietta, what do you
 “think of our beaux, are they not charm-
 “ing? Harry’s friend, for instance, don’t
 “you see a strong resemblance to Julia
 “in his features and countenance? I pro-
 “test it struck me the instant I beheld
 “them together.”—Lady Julia blushed
 at this speech, and gently reproved her
 sister for such flighty remarks. “She’s
 “just the same giddy creature she ever
 “was,” said Miss Montague; “you find,
 “Julia, ’tis in vain we oppose our sage
 “advice to her strange fantasies; she
 “is quite incorrigible:”—the Marchio-
 ness laughed, and Lady Julia replied,
 “Indeed

“ Indeed I am very angry with her for
 “ being so thoughtless, if that signified;
 “ did you observe poor Henry after sup-
 “ per, how he was disconcerted by her
 “ raillery ? ” — “ Was it not admirable ? ”
 exclaimed the Marchioness, bursting into
 a loud laugh, “ I declare I enjoyed it ex-
 “ ceedingly ; ” — “ That’s more than your
 “ brother did, ” returned Miss Montague,
 “ and I begin to suspect that the jest is a
 “ very serious one, by his colouring and
 “ looking so much discomposed. Did you
 “ observe Lady Osmond, how she watch-
 “ ed my countenance ? I could scarcely
 “ preserve my gravity under her scruti-
 “ nizing eye, and I fancy, because she did
 “ not see any symptoms of mortification
 “ in me, she was persuaded Osmond’s
 “ embarrassment proceeded from a fear,
 “ lest I should believe you knew more
 “ than you chose to tell ; I, however,
 “ have been convinced, ever since my
 “ uncle’s death, that the ambiguity of
 “ his conduct is the consequence of some

“ secret he will not entrust to us ; he and
 “ I have lived so like brother and sister
 “ all our lives, that if the affair was not
 “ of a singular nature, I am sure he would
 “ have made me his confidant, for he
 “ knows that I have no design upon his
 “ heart, though Lady Osmond has upon
 “ my fortune for him.” — “ My mother,”
 said Lady Julia, “ has so good an opinion
 “ of you, Henrietta, that she wishes to see
 “ you united to her son ; what can be more
 “ natural ? ” — “ I will give her all the
 “ credit you can desire, Julia,” replied
 Miss Montague, “ I believe she thinks
 “ as well of me as of any person of my
 “ heretical opinions ; and as Osmond
 “ will probably select a wife from amongst
 “ his own country-women, of his own
 “ religion, she gives me the preference ;
 “ I am descended, you know, from a fe-
 “ male of the same house, and am in pos-
 “ session of a fortune which the world may
 “ respect me for, but which I shall never,
 “ I hope, respect myself for ; unless it is
 I “ the

“the means in my hand of dispensing
 “good to my fellow-creatures who stand
 “in need of assistance.”—“Such senti-
 “ments, my dear Henrietta,” cried Lady
 Julia, “will ever create respect, love, and
 “admiration for you, in the minds of
 “all your friends, and the actions which
 “spring from them, can never fail of
 “drawing down a blessing on your head.
 “I who pay my adorations to the Deity,
 “through the medium of the blessed
 “Virgin and the Holy Saints, am not so
 “great a bigot as to refuse your virtues
 “their due reward.”—“You,” replied
 Miss Montague, “are all charity, bene-
 “volence, and kindness, to your friends
 “and the world; were all Catholics like
 “my ever-gentle Julia, we heretics
 “should be allowed a fairer chance of
 “Heaven than in general we are, I be-
 “lieve.”—“If you are getting into reli-
 “gious disquisitions,” said the Mar-
 chioness, “I wish you both good night;”
 then turning to Edelfrida, she added,

“ Mrs. Lucy, I must trouble you, I be-
 “ lieve, to light me to my room, for I
 “ bid Lucas wait there till I came to her.”
 Edelfrida took up a candle for the pur-
 pose, and preceded the lively Marchioness
 to the door of her apartment, then re-
 turned to Miss Montague’s, who was just
 taking leave of Lady Julia, and soon after
 dismissed her for the night. The next
 morning, when she attended her, she was
 asked how she liked the change of scene,
 when she replied, “ that though she
 “ ought not to repine at her attendance
 “ on a lady, whose goodness demanded
 “ her warmest gratitude, yet truth obliged
 “ her to confess, she greatly preferred
 “ Walton Park to her present abode.”—
 Miss Montague, with a smile of good-
 nature, replied, “ I thought, Lucy, you
 “ would have liked the gaiety of this place
 “ better than the stillness of Walton Park,
 “ but I perceive you are unfortunately
 “ very superior to the people you must
 “ associate with ; I wish it was in my
 “ power

“power to help it, but it is not, you
 “know.”—“Your kindness to me on all
 “occasions, Ma’am,” returned Edelfri-
 da, “particularly in the present instance,
 “is recompence sufficient to any mortifi-
 “cation I may chance to be exposed to.”
 Miss Montague looked hurt at the idea,
 but being dressed, she soon left Edelfrida
 to make the best of her condition, by con-
 forming to it, yet not without a double
 portion of reluctance from the specimen
 of the evening before, did she go to
 breakfast with the same set. She took
 her place next to Mrs. Mansel, but as be-
 fore kept silence, except when compelled
 to answer a question, which she did in as
 few words as possible, though civilly.

CHAPTER XLI.

AS soon as breakfast was over, Edelfrida again retired into Miss Montague's room, under pretence of preparing her dress for dinner, at which there was to be a large party of additional company, but in reality to avoid the conversation of the Abigails, who she saw regarded her with contempt, on account of her stupidity, as they termed it. This and the two following days, except merely at breakfast, dinner, and tea, she secluded herself from all the house, preserving her resolution never to sup below again, nor did she even indulge herself with a walk in the evening: but on the third day, there being no company, except such as were resident visitors at Barnly Manor, she yielded to Mrs. Mansel's intreaties, and went with the
other

other head servants to drink tea in the woods, and afterwards took a long walk, leaning on Mrs. Mansel's arm, without which she would not have gone. Finding that she had escaped observation, and being revived by the air and exercise, she was with less difficulty persuaded to take a second walk on the next evening, there being no company but such as were in the house to stay, and they generally walked another road in the plantations, if they walked at all; so that there appeared nothing to fear on that score. She sallied forth, then, between Mrs. Mansel and Lady Julia's woman, simply attired in a straw bonnet, a plain white gown, and no ornament whatever, as if happily to contrast the native beauty and elegant neatness of her figure, with the gaudy trumpery apparel of her companion; they had taken several turns in the extensive woods, and, to Edelfrida's great satisfaction, met nobody, so that they proceeded without apprehension, even on her part, till tak-

ing a path they knew nothing of, they found themselves just upon a party of ladies and gentlemen, who were moving that way; Lady Julia's woman, confident of her own attractions, wished nothing more than to encounter some of the gentlemen, but Edelfrida hung back; examining the persons of those who approached, she could perceive no one she knew, except Miss Montague and Lord and Lady Walton, therefore, somewhat re-assured, she consented to go forward: they stood aside while the first party passed by them, and were just moving on when the second came in view; but what language can describe Edelfrida's sensations, when she beheld Mr. Evelyne in conversation with Lady Julia; her colour went and came, she trembled from head to foot as they drew near, and fixing her eyes upon them in fearful expectation, she saw her Ladyship whisper him, and he instantly turned to look upon her; his countenance was not less expressive of
amaze-

amazement than her's was of disorder. "Is it possible!" he exclaimed, and at that moment, Edelfrida, hiding her face involuntarily with her hands, sunk down on the earth: he flew to her assistance, he raised her, and incoherently he conjured her not to be alarmed at thus unexpectedly seeing him; but she was by this time insensible to all he said or did. The servants and Lady Julia stood gazing on this extraordinary scene, in silent consternation, and by degrees the whole party flocked to the spot to inquire what was the matter; the last who approached was Lord Osmond, for he had been strolling by himself another way, but observing some confusion, he had followed the general lead; when he came up and found his friend with a woman lifeless in his arms, Lady Julia and Miss Montague looking with eyes of eager and anxious inquiry for an explanation, and every other person present expressing their astonishment at what Mr. Evelyne was too

much engaged in to give any account of, he felt a degree of curiosity natural on such an occasion; one glance, however, answered all his inquiries, and, like a man seized with a sudden frenzy, he rushed past them all, his cheek flushed, and his eye intently fixed on the object before him: "Have I then found her at last!"—he cried, almost breathless, with contending emotions. "You, perhaps," said Mr. Evelyne, resigning Edelfrida into his arms, which were extended to receive her, "you may be able to recall her to life, I cannot;"—"Fly!" exclaimed Lord Osmond, "fly, you inhuman, savage wretches, and bring me something to revive my Edelfrida with!"—The many, who had till this moment been stupidly looking on, now ran different ways to fetch different things to restore the still senseless Edelfrida to life again. Lord Osmond, mean time, passionately called upon her name without ceasing, while the big drops of manly sorrow rolled

ed down his glowing cheeks, kneeling on the ground he supported her, fixing his ardent eyes in eager gaze upon her pallid face. At length they brought water and various remedies to awaken her once more; the women servants would have held her, but he furiously ordered them not to touch her for their lives. Miss Montague ventured, however, to untie her bonnet and draw off her gloves; a deep sigh was the first symptom of returning life; "Thank God!" he exclaimed more calmly,—“be composed, my dear Osmond,” cried Mr. Evelyne, “and if you could prevail on yourself to retire to a little distance, her recovery will be more speedy, for the sight of you, I fear, will greatly agitate her, till she is prepared for it.”—“Do not argue with me, Evelyne,” he replied, “I will be torn piece-meal rather than be parted from her; but hush, she breathes again!”

Edel-

Edelfrida now opened her eyes, and casting them round her, they at last fixed on Lord Osmond's face, in which she read anxiety and tenderness struggling with apprehension; she shrieked, and shrunk from his embrace, then hastily clapping her hands to her head, then to her bosom, she burst into tears, and in a tone of anguish and impatience, she called on Heaven to pity her. Alarmed at her countenance and her manner, Lady Julia besought her brother to retire a little, "only for a moment, my dearest Henry,"—she earnestly cried, while Miss Montague, deeply interested in the distress of Edelfrida, gently took hold of her hand, and tried to sooth her; "Take me away then," said she, "O take me any where, dear, kind, compassionate lady; hide me from myself if possible;" saying this, she clung round Miss Montague's knees, as if dreading the instant when she should be torn from her.—"What," said Lord Osmond, "am
 " I be-

“ I become so hateful to you, Edelfrida,
 “ that you will not endure me for a mo-
 “ ment ; or,” added he, reproachfully,
 “ does the sight of me, upbraid you with
 “ your levity and inconstancy ?” she raised
 her head, which she had wrapped in Miss
 Montague’s gown, and a transient glance
 of indignation darted from her eye, “ How
 “ mean and false is the accusation !” she
 cried, “ but I scorn to retaliate ; enjoy
 “ your triumph, only cease to persecute
 “ me, cease to pursue me beyond the
 “ verge of destruction, to which you have
 “ already driven me, and I am satisfied.”
 This exertion was too much for her, in
 her present state, and growing sick, even
 to fainting, once more she fell gently
 down.—“ Oh, distraction !” he cried out,
 “ see, she sinks again, Julia, Henrietta,
 “ Evelyne, will none of you save her for
 “ me, I am her bane, it seems ?”—then
 rushing wildly up to a tree, he rested his
 head against it, and beat his bosom in
 passionate disorder. “ Is it not possible
 “ to

“to get her carried to the house?” said Lady Julia, “go,” added she, to her woman, who stood wondering what it could mean, “go, Villette, and send two “of the men with a chair, perhaps we “may be able to get her conveyed gently “that way.”—Villette did as she was ordered, and the Marchioness’s woman, and Mrs. Mansel tried to bring Edelfrida to herself once again, while Madame Friponne, the old French waiting woman, stole away, to give her lady intelligence of what was going forward; for Lady Osmond and Madame de Villeneuve had not walked out that evening, the Marchioness was the only one, these ladies excepted, who knew nothing of this affair; she was in another part of the gardens with a young French gentleman, who came over on a visit to the Marquis, who, being himself in conversation with Lord Walton, when Edelfrida first discovered Mr. Evelyne, had walked on with that nobleman and his lady, nor were they aware of

of the confusion her first fainting had occasioned, till some time after; so that when drawn by the appearance of hurry and distress, with which the servants hastened to the spot, they found the situation of Lord Osmond so strangely peculiar, with Miss Montague's maid apparently dead in his arms, they were wholly at a loss what to make of it; his violent exclamations they as little understood, and it was no time for asking questions; they, therefore, stood aloof, as spectators only, in this extraordinary scene; but when Lady Julia gave her orders about carrying Edelfrida to the house, the Marquis immediately stepped forward, and said, "If Mr. Evelyne would assist him, they could convey her there;" just as they were raising her for the purpose, the men servants came with a chair, in which Edelfrida was placed, the Marquis and Mr. Evelyne bearing it themselves, while Miss Montague and Lady Julia supported her on either side.

Lord

Lord and Lady Walton staid behind to calm the transports of passion which shook Lord Osmond's frame, as he stood reclining against the tree, an agonized witness of Edelfrida's departure, in such a senseless, unconscious state; when she was quite gone, he gave way to the storm, which had been gathering within him: he became furious, he would follow her; then recollecting her words, he cried out,—“ No, I will not pursue her, she
 “ accuses me of having driven her to the
 “ verge of destruction: I call Heaven to
 “ witness my truth, when I swear that my
 “ honour and integrity to her are unblemished; it shall be explained, I will
 “ not sleep till it is explained; she shall,
 “ she must, acquit me! by Heaven she
 “ shall! I will compel her to confess that
 “ she has wronged me this instant, before
 “ those who heard the false accusation.”
 Away he was flying, full of this resolution, when Lord Walton caught him by the arm, saying, “ Stay, stay, Lord Osmond,
 “ reflect on what you are about, consider
 “ the

" the condition you have already reduced
 " her to, then ask yourself whether it is a
 " time for explanation ; whatever or
 " whoever she may be, some regard is
 " due to her present situation of mind,
 " which you have proved, is unequal to
 " any conflict."—" Whatever, or who-
 " ever !" repeated Lord Osmond, indig-
 " nantly, " does your Lordship mean to
 " question her claim to respect and con-
 " sideration, independent of her present
 " most unhappy state, then ?"—" I mean
 " not to question any thing," replied Lord
 " Walton, calmly, " I thought, the instant
 " I first saw her, that she was superior
 " to her situation ; but such as she chose
 " to appear, I was induced to believe
 " her, from my ignorance of her real con-
 " dition."—" I do not comprehend your
 " Lordship," returned Lord Osmond ;
 " what condition or situation do you
 " allude to ? Could any thing conceal the
 " title my Edelfrida has to the most un-
 " doubted superiority of soul and form ?"—

" I saw

"I saw she was beautiful," said Lord Walton; "of her other qualifications, her place in my family gave me no opportunity of judging, except from the intelligence of her countenance."—"What place in your family, my Lord," cried the irritated Osmond, "could she fill? Was my Edelfrida degraded then with servitude? Did she mix with hirelings? Oh, Heaven! I shall run mad at the very idea: tell me, Lord Walton, could you not be satisfied without selecting your domestics from amongst the most perfect works of the Creation? Must the most excellent of the Great Creator's children, must she be the slave of your command? O give me patience to bear this injury!"—"When your Lordship is in a state of mind to attend to a plain and simple narrative of facts, I will explain, as far as I am concerned, the whole seeming mystery to your satisfaction, I have no doubt," replied Lord Walton, who was himself too reasonable

sonable to quarrel with him, or be offended at the angry and haughty terms in which he had addressed him; he considered him as one whose senses were disordered for a time, and treated him accordingly. Lord Osmond then sullenly walked towards the house, refusing all farther communication with Lord and Lady Walton, to whom he ascribed the injustice of having degraded Edelfrida; for though he was ready to condemn and reproach her for her conduct towards himself, he could not with patience endure to think that any other person should for a moment use her unworthily, or take any unfair advantage whatever of her: that they should presume to think, or speak of her without respect, and almost adoration equal to his own. He now thought that he would see her again, only to tell her of his lost affection and esteem—unfold a secret which he had long wished for an opportunity of doing, give her his reasons for ever having appeared under another name

name to her, and then, having cleared himself from the charge of imposition, take his final leave of her, fly the kingdom, and abjure the sex: this was what he meditated, as he slowly approached the house; but before he reached it, he encountered the Marchioness and her French friend. "For Heaven's sake, Osmond," cried she, "what has occasioned the unusual bustle every creature seems to be in? I have seen five or six people running backwards and forwards, with such hurry and importance, that it has raised my curiosity; pray can you satisfy it?—" "Why am I the only person you think proper to apply to for information?" replied Lord Osmond, who concluding his sister must know what every other person seemed so well acquainted with, added, "have you any particular pleasure in sporting with my feelings? if you have, you could not have chosen a better subject for your purpose."—"Good Heaven!" she exclaimed,

claimed, “ what do you mean ? I am at a
 “ loss to understand you, Osmond.”—
 “ Any servant in your house,” returned
 he, “ can better explain what I mean,
 “ than I can myself, I refer you to them ;”
 then, too greatly agitated to hear or
 speak again, he darted past them, and ran
 into the house. “ My Lord Osmond,”
 said Monsieur de Sangvere, “ seems a
 “ little *derangé*.”—“ Not a little,” re-
 plied the Marchioness ; “ for Heaven’s
 “ sake, let us inquire the cause of it !”
 They then followed him, and meeting
 one of the servants in the hall, the Mar-
 chioness stopped him, to learn what had
 happened. “ Indeed, my Lady,” re-
 plied the footman, “ I cannot tell, only
 “ Mrs. Lucy, Miss Montague’s maid,
 “ was seized with a fainting fit in the
 “ plantation, and my Lord Osmond
 “ coming up at the time, his Lordship
 “ held her in his arms, and would not
 “ suffer any body else to assist her, till
 “ my Lord the Marquis, and Mr.
 “ Evelynne

“ Evelyne carried her into the house be-
 “ tween them, and I believe she is now
 “ very ill up stairs; the ladies are with
 “ her:”—“ Very well,” said the Marchi-
 oness, dismissing her footman, and turning
 to Monsieur de Sangvere, “ what can all
 “ this mean?”—Monsieur shrugged up
 his shoulders, and with a significant grin,
 seemed to say, it is easily explained; the
 Marchioness understood the grimace, and
 laughing, said, “ Poor Osmond, the dis-
 “ covery was rather mal-à-propos, it must
 “ be confessed, that made him so angry
 “ then; well, I declare I don’t wonder at
 “ his being provoked, it was so public,
 “ and he so much off his guard—but he
 “ is so impetuous, that he must for ever
 “ be in some scrape; did you see the girl,
 “ Sangvere?” added she, “ She is really
 “ angelic.”—“ No;” replied he, “ I
 “ have not seen her; when I have the ho-
 “ nour and felicity of living in your Lady-
 “ ship’s presence, enjoying the splendor
 “ of your beauty, it would be the most
 “ wretch-

“wretched apostasy to turn aside, and
 “the infidelity would be severely punish-
 “ed in the disappointment; for where,”
 continued he, bowing, “where shall my
 “senses be so dazzled with perfection as
 “at this moment! Command me not,
 “then, to withdraw my eyes from the
 “shrine of their devotion!”—“Vastly
 “pretty, indeed,” said she, laughing,
 “but I protest you shall see Osmond’s
 “goddess, and then if you are of the
 “same opinion, my triumph will be more
 “complete, you know.”—“Your tri-
 “umph,” returned he, pressing her hand
 to his lips, “is ever complete and ever
 “durable!”—“Admirable!” replied she,
 “but now excuse me, my curiosity has
 “subdued my vanity for a moment, and
 “I must leave you to think of me, whilst
 “I go in search of yet more intelligence
 “on this extraordinary subject.”—“Adieu,
 “then, my fair tyrant,” exclaimed he, as
 the Marchioness moved away, “hasten
 “to revive me once more by your pre-
 VOL. III. D “sence.”

“fence.”—At this instant, while Monsieur was speaking, with all the affected languor of an expiring lover, Lord Osmond again crossed them like a restless, angry ghost, and casting on both a glance of fiery indignation, mingled with contempt, he passed on in silence. Monsieur de Sangvere thought proper to walk away, the Marchioness also hastened to find her sister and Miss Montague, not much pleased that her brother had heard Monsieur’s parting speech, which she persuaded herself was nothing more than French gallantry on his part, and innocent badinage on her’s, her disposition and education neither of them inclining her to think or act seriously.

CHAPTER XLII.

EDELFRIDA, who had with difficulty been brought to herself by the great activity and attention of Lady Julia and Miss Montague, who neither of them ever left her a moment, was still too weak and languid to remove the mystery in which her character was enveloped; they, however, patiently waited till she was in a situation to gratify their natural desire to hear her history. She made many attempts to express her acknowledgements for their kind compassion: “ Though fortune,” said she, “ has cast me beneath your friendship, you shall be assured that I have not forfeited my claim to your pity and commiseration, by any act criminal or disgraceful in itself, though appearances are so unfavourable to me; all concealment implies a con-

"sciousness of guilt, but I thank heaven,
 "my heart acquits me: that I am the
 "most unhappy and forlorn of all the hu-
 "man race, is too certain; that for errors
 "innumerable I have to blush, I cannot
 "deny; yet, amidst the ruin of all my
 "earthly prospects, this consolation is still
 "left me, that I never had a thought
 "which virtue and honour need dis-
 "own."—"Don't distress or fatigue
 "yourself," cried Miss Montague, "we
 "will wait till you are more able to talk,
 "at present I am sure you are not."—
 "You are very good, Madam;" returned
 Edelfrida, "I am beyond measure hurt
 "to involve you in any part of my trou-
 "bles; but indeed I did not expect to
 "have seen Mr. Evelyn here, or I
 "should have availed myself of your
 "kind permission to have remained at
 "Walton Park."—"Mr. Evelyn's!" ex-
 claimed Lady Julia!—"Yes, Ma'am;"
 replied Edelfrida, whose pale cheek was
 instantly covered with a deep crimson,—

"My dear," said Miss Montague, "there
 "is but one Mr. Evelyne, and though
 "you were first distressed by his appear-
 "ance, it was Lord Osmond who reduced
 "you to insensibility a second time."—
 "Lord Osmond!" exclaimed she, "did
 "my eyes, and my bewildered senses then
 "deceive me! I thought it was Mr.
 "Henry Evelyne, who cruelly and vio-
 "lently upbraided me with levity and
 "inconstancy."—Miss Montague and
 Lady Julia looked at each other in asto-
 nishment; "'Tis very strange," said
 they, in the same instant, and in a low
 voice, "but we are all guilty of great
 "imprudence," added Miss Montague,
 "in thus dwelling on a painful subject
 "till you are more recovered; now do
 "compose yourself, and I will sit by you
 "without speaking a single word more."—
 Just then the Marchioness entered, all
 impatience to come to the bottom of this
 mystery; but Lady Julia taking her by
 the arm, said, "Come, I shall turn both
 D 3 "you

“you and myself out, for Henrietta has
 “made a law of silence here, which I ap-
 “prove too much to break it, and as it
 “will not suit your humour, Clara, we
 “will go to those who may talk with
 “safety.”—The sisters then left the room
 together, and Miss Montague stayed to
 keep every thing quiet, kindly suppressing
 her own curiosity in consideration of the
 shock Edelfrida had received, but by no
 means recovered; yet was she not without
 anxiety to know how Lord Osmond
 would clear himself of duplicity in this
 affair.

While all was silent up stairs, the Mar-
 chioness and Lady Julia sought the party
 below, after the latter had given the for-
 mer all the particulars she yet knew,
 which, however, by no means satisfied
 her. As they descended, with an inten-
 tion of going into the saloon, they met
 Lord Osmond on the stairs, whose coun-
 tenance expressed the restless anxiety he
 suffered, to know in what state Edelfrida
 con-

continued ; to Lady Julia he addressed himself for information : “ Is she yet sensible, is she composed again ? ” said he, earnestly.—“ She is both,” replied his sister, “ and if not again disturbed, will soon, I hope, be well.”—“ Who has disturbed her ? ” returned he, “ who could be so inhuman ? Where is Henrietta ? I hope she is by this time convinced that she must content herself with a less distinguished attendant.”—“ Henrietta,” replied Lady Julia, “ is all kindness and compassion, you have nothing to reproach her with ; let the result of the discovery be what it may, her conduct has been uniformly generous, consistent, and candid ; did every other person act on her principles, we should escape much of the sorrow we accuse our fortune with.”—“ If you point at me, Julia,” he answered with warmth, “ I can make my actions and intentions appear in the broad face of day, just and honest, honourable and

D 4

“ fin-

"sincere, though I see you are prejudiced
 "against me."—"No," said Lady Julia,
 "I am not prejudiced, I judge simply
 "from observation, for I have not heard a
 "syllable of explanation on either side."—
 "Well, then," replied he, "you shall
 "hear the whole unembellished truth in
 "her presence, who is so intimately con-
 "nected with the story I have to relate;
 "you can then fear no deception or exte-
 "nuation which may not be unfolded or
 "refuted by herself."—"And are we to
 "wait till she is well?" cried the Mar-
 "chioness, "I protest I am dying with im-
 "patience this very moment."—"Apply
 "to Monsieur de Sangvere," returned
 "Osmond, sternly, "his conversation may
 "prove an antidote to the disorder, and
 "the Marquis, no doubt, will thank him
 "for his trouble."—The Marchioness
 "turned pale and burst into tears; but her
 "angry brother left her to recover the con-
 "sternation he had thrown her into by this
 "unexpected reproof. "Dear Clara,"
 "cried

cried Lady Julia, almost as much distressed herself, " what can he mean? I never
" saw him so frightfully unreasonable; this
" affair has strangely discomposed his
" temper."—" It has, indeed," replied
the Marchioness, when her tears would
give her leave to speak ; " but pray, my
" dear Julia, don't mention what he said
" of Sangvere before the Marquis, for
" he, too, may take it into his head to be
" displeased that I receive common po-
" liteness with good humour and civility;
" you may be assured that Monsieur de
" Sangvere never addressed any thing to
" me, that was not perfectly consistent
" with honour and delicacy."—" I have
" too good an opinion of my sister's ho-
" nour and delicacy," said Lady Julia,
" to suppose she would submit to what
" every woman of modesty and character
" must consider an insult; Osmond sees
" every thing through a jaundiced eye,
" in the present perturbation of his
" mind."—This conversation brought

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them

them to the door of the saloon, so that nothing farther could be said at that time. They found Lord and Lady Walton, the Marquis, Monsieur de Sangvere, and Mr. Evelyné, only, there; Lady Osmond and Madame de Villeneuve were not of the number. The subject upon which this party were engaged, was of course, what had so lately occurred; but Mr. Evelyné not having received Lord Osmond's permission to explain the affair, only spoke of it in general terms, affirming, however, that his friend could give a very satisfactory account whenever he chose to do so, to those whom it might concern; with this imperfect idea of the half told secret, they were obliged to be content, and supper soon after put an end to the discourse. Lady Osmond and her friend joined the party, but though their looks expressed that they were no strangers to what was going forward, they made no observations, only carelessly inquiring how the young woman did who was so suddenly seized

seized in the gardens; Lady Osmond then looking round her, affected to perceive, just at that instant, that her son and Miss Montague were both absent; "Osmond," said the Marquis, "has excused himself on account of a slight indisposition, a pain in his head, or something of that sort; his man brought his apologies, and said he was going to bed: Miss Montague is, I believe, charitably engaged with the invalid."— Nothing more was said, and at an earlier hour than usual the bell was rung for lights, every body appearing glad of a release from the constraint each other's presence imposed.

Lady Julia went immediately to Miss Montague's room, whom she found employed in administering to Edelfrida a composing draught which had been sent by the apothecary; and it had been her intention to have watched its operation through the night, had not her patient so strongly opposed it, that she feared to

irritate her nerves with the contention ; it was, therefore, agreed that one of the housemaids should set up with Mrs. Mansel, and that Miss Montague resigning her apartment, should sleep with Lady Julia for that night ; the two ladies then charging every thing might be kept as still as possible, committed Edelfrida to her attendants, and wishing her good night, retired to their own room ; conversing and conjecturing what would be the result of all ; waiting, with every observation, the tenderest sympathy and truest concern in the fate of a beautiful and unhappy young woman, as in that of a beloved brother, relation, and friend, for such Lord Osmond was to both of them. The family met at breakfast as they had parted over night, still ignorant, and still anxious to remove the veil. Miss Montague, calling at Edelfrida's door, learnt, that after a very restless and uneasy night, she had fallen into a quiet sleep, and was still enjoying it : she then gently renewed
her

her charge to have no noise made, ordered to be called when Edelfrida awoke; and joined the breakfast party; from which was absent, as usual, Lady Osmond and her friend; they always breakfasted together in her Ladyship's dressing-room; and Lord Osmond was also missing on this morning, but Mr. Evelyne had seen him, and said he was rather more composed than he had been, though not equal to an encounter with the family till an explanation had taken place, and he had formed his resolutions in consequence of it.

Meanwhile, Edelfrida waking and feeling herself refreshed, got up and dressed herself, with Mrs. Mansel's assistance, impatient to wipe off any prejudice the scene of the evening before might have made on the minds of those present, particularly to exculpate herself in Miss Montague's opinion. She consented to swallow a little breakfast that she might be better able to go through the distressing narrative; then sent to beg Miss Montague's

gue's presence, if she was at leisure :
 that Lady came without delay, and con-
 gratulating her on the improvement there
 appeared in her, still desired, if she did
 not feel herself entirely equal to the task,
 that she would postpone it. "No, Ma-
 dam," replied Edelfrida, "you cannot
 be half so anxious to hear, as I am to
 relate the circumstances which have in-
 volved me in this seeming mystery of
 conduct ; that I am not what I have ap-
 peared to you to be, you, doubtless, al-
 ready guess ; but why I am not, 'tis fit
 you should be made acquainted."—
 "You will permit me," returned Miss
 Montague, "to make my friends privy to
 your communication?"—"Whatever
 you please ;" replied Edelfrida, sighing
 and colouring deeply.—"Nay, but if it
 distresses you," said Miss Montague,
 hesitating.—"You are very good and very
 considerate, Ma'am," replied Edelfri-
 da, "but though I know I may safely
 trust my cause with you, yet why
 should

" should I trouble you to repeat what
 " your friends may as well hear from my-
 " self; that unhappy meeting in the gar-
 " den has made my affairs so public al-
 " ready, that it is now my interest to have
 " them fully known; therefore, if you
 " please, I will attend you wherever you
 " think proper to collect your friends."—
 " In the Marchioness's dressing-room,
 " then," said Miss Montague; " I will
 " conduct you there, and acquaint the la-
 " dies that they have your leave to be
 " present at the promised recital."—

CHAPTER XLII.

WHEN Miss Montague had conducted the trembling Edelfrida into the Marchioness's dressing-room, and said every thing kind and encouraging to keep up her drooping spirits, she went in search of the ladies (not including Lady Osmond and Madame de Villeneuve,) who were to be present when all the mystery was to be unravelled. She returned to the breakfast-room, in order to seek for them, and there found Lord Osmond also, who, the instant he saw her, exclaimed, "Henrietta, I am impatient to clear myself of the imputation of fraud and artifice; you must, therefore, prepare Edelfrida to bear my presence, however disagreeable it may be to her, while I explain to her, to you, and to the few friends whose good
" opinion

“ opinion I value, the motives on which
 “ I have acted. Evelyne can witness the
 “ truth of what I shall assert, and,” con-
 tinued he, his eyes flashing fire at the
 base idea, “ when you are made ac-
 “ quainted with the real condition of
 “ your attendant, you will better know
 “ how to estimate her services.” — “ You
 “ are unreasonably angry, Osmond,” re-
 plied Miss Montague, with great gentle-
 ness, “ at finding this lovely and un-
 “ happy young woman, in a situation
 “ so unworthy of her ; I always felt that
 “ it was so, but I had no clue to direct me
 “ to the knowledge of what I suspected,
 “ that she was born to a superior fortune :
 “ she was recommended to me by Lady
 “ Walton’s housekeeper, as her niece,
 “ who wished to be my maid. I had no
 “ reason to doubt Mrs. Williams’s vera-
 “ city ; and to have objected to her sup-
 “ posed relation, merely because nature
 “ had been particularly lavish to her,
 “ would, in me, have appeared the effect
 “ of

" of caprice ; or, it might fairly have been
 " imagined that, envious of her beauty,
 " I did not chuse to have one so attrac-
 " tive about me, from a fear of compa-
 " risons unfavourable to myself. This
 " being a real state of the case with respect
 " to her becoming my servant, why does
 " your displeasure fall upon me? I am
 " ready and willing to make all the
 " amends in my power for the involuntary
 " fault. If you consider her so much de-
 " graded by waiting upon me, I will
 " cheerfully efface the stain as much as
 " possible, by administering to all her
 " wants myself; I will, in turn, be her
 " servant."—" I believe, indeed," said
 " Osmond, " that I am unreasonable in my
 " quarrelling with you, Henrietta; my
 " evil genius, not you, has been busy to
 " torment me; forgive me, if I have ex-
 " pressed myself harshly, make some al-
 " lowances for a mind torn by contending
 " passions, and generously forget the of-
 " fence, in your sympathy for the misfor-
 " tunes

“tunes of the offender.”—“Be as secure
 “of every happiness, as of my sympathy
 “and friendship,” she replied, “and you
 “have nothing to fear.”—“Go, then,”
 said he, “go and tell Edelfrida that I
 “must see her; I am on the rack till every
 “thing is explained between us.”—I
 “know not how she will support the in-
 “terview,” returned Miss Montague.—
 “Not support it, not see me!” he ex-
 claimed with vehemence, “by Heaven
 “she must! I’ll not endure the torture of
 “suspense another hour to purchase the
 “universe! she has injured, she has de-
 “stroyed my happiness! shall she not then
 “make me the small amends of hearing
 “me speak in my own defence, and satis-
 “fying me in some particulars, in which
 “no other person can satisfy me? Must I
 “bear all the pain? Shall the odium of
 “unmerited disgrace fall solely on me,
 “nor the poor gratification of justifying
 “myself be allowed me? No, Henrietta,
 “I can never submit patiently to that,
 “my

" my temper is too fiery, too impetuous,
 " to brook this additional wrong; go,
 " then, and prepare the still seducing
 " Edelfrida to receive me."—" Certain-
 " ly," said Miss Montague, " I will do
 " as you desire me, but I confess it is
 " with reluctance I comply, from a fear
 " of agitating the already trembling nerves
 " of this unfortunate object of your re-
 " sentment. First, however, grant me
 " one request, promise that you will curb
 " the warmth of your temper, nor suffer
 " yourself to be hurried into the language
 " of severe reproach, which I foresee would
 " deeply wound the aching heart of one
 " you once thought differently of; one
 " reduced by a cruel necessity; I am per-
 " suaded, to take the steps she has done."—
 " Believe me," he returned, " I think
 " the caution is unnecessary, her power
 " over my feelings is still too potent for
 " my peace, and should she shew but the
 " faintest symptom of regret for the pains
 " she has inflicted on my heart, my re-
 " sentment

"sentment will expire in tenderness and
 "love; but if she treats me with that
 "haughty disdain, belonging only to me
 "as the injured, I cannot promise that I
 "shall not retort."—"Come Julia, then,"
 said Miss Montague, "come with me,
 "and assist me to make known your bro-
 "ther's demand, she will wonder I do not
 "return; for I came purposely to fetch
 "you, Lady Walton, and the Marchio-
 "ness, if you chose to listen to the ac-
 "count she means to give of herself."—
 "Remember," said Lord Osmond, fierce-
 ly, "that I too, Henrietta, will listen to
 "that account, for I am materially inte-
 "rested in it." The Marquis had walked
 or rode out with Lord Walton and Mon-
 sieur de Sangvere, so that there was no
 one present at this conversation but those
 who were intended to hear the whole af-
 fair. Lady Julia and Miss Montague
 then went up to Edelfrida, who had all
 this time been arguing herself into a reso-
 lution to tell her story with firmness and
 compo-

composure; they found her, however, pale, trembling, and low-spirited, and scarcely able to support herself on her seat. Miss Montague gave her hartshorn and water, ere she ventured to open her commission, hoping it would a little revive her, and enable her to go through a scene which, she was convinced, it would be impossible to avoid, Lord Osmond seemed so determined upon it; and she knew his disposition too well, to expect he would otherwise be pacified: she sat down by her on the sofa, took her hand, and tenderly inquired whether she felt herself able to bear the presence of the few friends who were waiting for a summons. “The longer I delay to speak of
 “myself,” replied Edelfrida, faintly, “the
 “less resolution I find myself possessed of
 “for the purpose; I will, therefore, if
 “possible, collect my scattered thoughts,
 “and now, if you please, Ma’am, enter
 “upon the distressing task.”—“But,”
 said Miss Montague, hesitating, “I have
 “under-

“undertaken to urge a request which I
 “yet fear to name to you.”—“Any re-
 “quest of yours, Ma’am,” replied Edel-
 frida, “shall, if possible, be complied
 “with.”—“Lord Osmond, then,” resu-
 mmed Miss Montague, Edelfrida was co-
 vered with a deep blush at the mention of
 his name, “hopes you will not refuse him
 “the satisfaction of hearing the narrative
 “of events, in which he professes himself
 “greatly interested.” Edelfrida covered
 her burning face with her hands, but the
 scalding tears of anguish forced their way,
 and discovered to the two ladies, who
 were silent, though not unmoved specta-
 tors of her grief, how much she was af-
 fected; at length, recovering herself, and
 by an extraordinary effort of resolution,
 as it were, she exclaimed, “Yes, let him
 “come, what should I fear! my inno-
 “cence is a shield against all his cruel and
 “unjust reproaches—reproaches by which
 “he means to conceal his own perfidy:”
 then observing Lady Julia looking at her,
 more

more indeed in sorrow than in anger, she continued, " Pardon me, Madam, I ought to have remembered it was your brother of whom I spoke; but the sweetness of your countenance, the benignant softness of pity and sensibility, which beams from your eye, tells me you can pardon the inadvertent accusation, which sorrow and disappointment forced from me."—" I am only sorry," replied Lady Julia, " that on either side there should be cause for accusation or reproach; but, perhaps, this desired explanation may remove, what now preys upon the happiness of Osmond, as well as your's; hear from him, in justice to yourself and him, hear what he ardently wishes to say on the subject."—" I will, Madam," sighed forth Edelfrida, " I will hear, and then, at least, I shall be relieved from the torture of doubt, and the anxiety of suspense."—" Shall I tell him now then that you will admit him?" said Lady Julia; " If you please, Madam," replied

replied Edelfrida, sorrowfully. Her Ladyship then went down, and in a few minutes returned, accompanied by her brother and sister, Lady Walton, and Mr. Evelyn. As they entered the room, Edelfrida caught hold of Miss Montague's hand, saying, "Now, dear Madam, in pity help me to sustain this trial." Lord Osmond did not appear more composed than herself.

CHAPTER XLIV.

OF the party now collected in the Marchioness's dressing-room, not one person felt the tranquil calm of indifference. Lady Walton, though passed the season of that extreme sensibility, which agonizes youthful bosoms, and least concerned in what was to follow, of any person present, yet could not behold a woman whose exterior endowments were of that striking and prepossessing kind, which seize the mind with irresistible force, and compel the judgement to decide in their favour, placed in a situation which called forth to view all the loveliness of her figure, and all the various emotions of her soul, without feeling anxious, interested, and agitated; the sensations of the rest were still more lively, they looked at Edelfrida and Lord Osmond by turns, as
if

if doubtful where their sympathy was most due. When the Marchioness and Lady Walton had made their inquiries of Edel-
frida, concerning her health, Lord Of-
mond, who had, during this time, made
an effort to compose himself, then ap-
proached her, and bowing, said, " Pain-
ful and distressing as it must ever
be to me, to wound the feelings of
Miss Dudley, I am now compelled to
solicit her patient attention to that
which is, indeed, selfishly intended for
my own justification only, and to ex-
culpate me from the disgraceful charge
of ever having designed to impose upon
you: will you permit me, Ma'am, to
save you the trouble of informing this
company how and where I had first the
honour of your acquaintance, what was
the result of our meeting? and in the
course of the recital, I shall briefly ex-
plain why I called myself by another
name, and passed for the brother of my
friend."—"If you please," replied Edel-

frida, struggling to appear indifferent and to conceal the throbbing emotions of her beating heart, under the disguise of offended pride and cold disdain. Lord Osmond, evidently piqued by the little encouragement she seemed disposed to give him as an excuse for the tenderness, he with difficulty restrained under the appearance of resentment, paused for a moment to recover himself, then entered upon the task, which, it was plain to perceive, he found no easy one; for as he spoke of their first meeting, he felt all the pangs of reviving love and admiration kindle in his breast: he suddenly checked himself, when speaking of the felicity he then enjoyed, and fixing his eyes on Edelfrida, he exclaimed, " Fool that I was to
 " suppose it would last for ever, too soon,
 " the fatal delusion vanished, and convinced me that I had trusted my happiness with one who, in the vortex of
 " pleasure and dissipation, buried all remembrance of past events, consigning
 " those

“those whose misfortune it was to be in-
 “terwoven with them, to oblivion.”
 Edelfrida only replied to this indirect
 charge with a look of calm contempt; he
 then proceeded, his cheeks glowing with
 the pain of recollection; he related their
 journey to England in the language of
 truth, indeed, but uniting those reflections
 which arose from disappointment; he
 spoke of the happy days he had passed at
 Mr. Miller’s in the city, with the ardour
 of love and resentment, that they were to
 return no more; he came down slowly
 and unwillingly to the period in which
 his hopes deserted him. “From Dudley
 Park,” said he, addressing himself more
 particularly to Edelfrida, “I received
 “letters from you, which still taught me
 “to believe I was to be happy; in the
 “last you told me, you were going to
 “Welford Lodge, whither then I di-
 “rected my next letter; but before I
 “could reasonably expect an answer, I
 “was called upon to attend a dying uncle,

" to whom I had vainly flattered myself
 " that I should introduce a future niece,
 " who had every claim to the affection he
 " kindly bestowed on me, and to whom
 " he would have been anxious to have
 " united me. I found him so ill, that all
 " hopes of his recovery were lost ; but as he
 " was perfectly sensible and composed, I
 " knew it would give him pleasure, even
 " in his dying hour, to hear that I had so
 " fair a prospect of felicity ; he made me
 " tell how I became acquainted with you,
 " I hesitated not, for it was my intention
 " to reveal the whole truth to him, had I
 " found him as I wished, likely to live,
 " I informed him, then, that Evelyne and
 " myself had been seized with a wish to
 " make a stolen tour on the Continent ;
 " that to avoid discovery, and the absurd
 " parade expected with a title, I had bor-
 " rowed my friend's name, and we re-
 " solved to pass for brothers ; and as he
 " was known to be the eldest son of his
 " own family, I called myself Henry
 " Evelyne,

"Evelyne, to avoid any embarrassments
 "we might be thrown into, should we ac-
 "cidentally meet any of his acquaint-
 "tance."—"But why," said he, "did
 "you not explain to Miss Dudley, when
 "you made her an offer of your hand,
 "that your name was not Evelyne?
 "Should any chance make the discovery
 "to her, she will justly charge you with
 "duplicity and want of confidence in her
 "affection." To this I replied, "That it
 "was fully my intention to make you ac-
 "quainted with the deceit the moment
 "we met; but in fact, it had been my de-
 "sign to have made him the instrument
 "of explanation, at the time when I had
 "indulged the expectation of presenting
 "him to you in London, as I had pro-
 "mised; but as I dared no longer hope
 "for that happiness, I did not chuse to
 "mention to him my intention, as it would
 "have been giving him to understand I
 "had in my own mind consigned him to
 "the grave. I assured him, that I enter-

"tained no doubt of your affection, and
 "that I would instantly write to you, and
 "intreat your pardon for having yielded
 "to a foolish whim of concealing my name
 "so long, in order to prove that I was as
 "much the object of your choice as a
 "younger brother with a small fortune,
 "as I could be in my real character;
 "accuse me not of acting meanly by this
 "disguise; I could never endure the idea
 "of owing to an empty title, and a for-
 "tune which gave me intrinsic merit,
 "the hand of the woman I passionately
 "loved; and I considered myself peculi-
 "arly fortunate, that, without any preme-
 "ditated scheme on my part, I had been
 "able to secure your affection, while you
 "were yet ignorant of my situation in
 "life; it gave me a confidence in you,
 "which you alone could have destroyed.
 "As I proposed, I immediately wrote to
 "you a long and circumstantial letter,
 "which left nothing to be explained
 "hereafter, but to that, as to the former,
 "I re-

" I received no answer; never doubting
 " your truth, I hastily wrote a third, con-
 " juring you to relieve me from the tor-
 " ments of suspense, or if by any unhappy
 " accident you were deprived of writing
 " yourself, I intreated that you would get
 " some friend just to say you were alive,
 " and had received my letters; that if you
 " were ill, I would fly to you, notwith-
 " standing my uncle still languished on
 " his death bed:—but, O Heavens and
 " earth! at the very instant when the hand
 " of Fate, regardless of my agonies, for-
 " ever deprived me of a relation, a father,
 " and a friend, to whom I was bound by
 " the strong ties of duty, gratitude, and
 " affection! even then, while I groaned
 " under the anguish of that recent loss,
 " I was destined to feel all the accumu-
 " lated sorrows of the most cruel disap-
 " pointment. This horrid letter," continu-
 ed he, in violent agitation, taking a paper
 from his waistcoat pocket with a trem-
 bling hand: " This vile letter plunged me

“ into despair and madness ; I raved, and
 “ impatiently sustained an existence which
 “ was rendered worthless by such repeat-
 “ ed blows.”—He then unfolded the letter
 with difficulty, and in an hasty and disor-
 dered manner read the contents aloud :

“ SIR,

“ MISS Edelfrida Dudley commissions
 me to inform you that she has received
 your letters, but that the discovery of
 your name and consequence comes too
 late ; she is sorry you have taken the
 trouble to make it on her account, as she
 feels herself little disposed to place any
 farther confidence in the man who has
 once deceived her, nor can she be certain,
 that ere she could give her hand to Lord
 Osmond, she might not find that, came-
 leon like, his Lordship was again changed
 into something less, than even plain Mr.
 Henry Evelyn. She, therefore, re-
 quests that my Lord or Mr. which ever
 you may be at the time of receiving this,
 will

will do her the favour to drop all farther correspondence with her; she is engaged in very different pursuits, since she was so unguarded to allow a stranger to force himself into her acquaintance, which it is now no longer either proper or convenient for her to keep up. Wishing you all imaginable happiness and prosperity with your new dignity, she orders me to assure you this is the last you will hear from her."

"Good God!" exclaimed Edelfrida, no longer able to preserve her silence, "who could have had the cruelty, the baseness, to fabricate that infamous letter in my name? I call Heaven to witness, that I never received a line from you after my departure from Dudley Park, nor did I ever commission any one to write to you; instead of being unfolded," added she, "the mystery seems to increase and to grow impenetrable."—"Examine the hand-writing

“attentively,” said Lord Osmond, in all
 the flutter of hope and fear, “try if you
 “can discover who the black scroll was
 “written by, that I may call them to a
 “strict account for the injury they have
 “done me.”—She held out a trembling
 hand to receive it, but the characters
 were wholly unknown to her; and how-
 ever her suspicions might glance on Lady
 Walsford or Miss Walsford, she was not
 authorized to name them, as she could
 not perceive any resemblance to their
 hand-writing, in that which she held:
 “No,” said she, “I am totally at a loss;
 “I have no guess who could have written
 “it; I did not know I had so great an
 “enemy in the world, though I have ex-
 “perienced the evils of dependence in no
 “small degree; but such treachery, such
 “vile and secret machinations, I should
 “never have suspected.”—Lord Osmond
 looked at her while she spoke, with such
 a mingled expression of joy, apprehen-
 sion, and anxiety in his countenance, all
 stri-

striving for pre-eminence, that it was impossible not to foresee the result of this explanation; all the hauteur of offended pride and angry resentment vanished; his air no longer retained the stately and embarrassed stiffness which his former feelings had imparted to it; it softened, by degrees, into the most expressive tenderness: "Can you forgive me?" said he, "can you generously forgive the wrongs I have done you? Oh, my Edelfrida!" he continued, taking her hand, which still held the insidious letter, "will you not cheer me with one smile of peace and pardon, in pity to the sufferings I have already endured? Cease to torture me with this coldness, this dreadful silence!"—"Oh, Madam!" said Edelfrida, trying to disengage her hand from him, and turning to Miss Montague, who sat by her, "now, then, support, advise, direct me, or I am lost!"—"What, my dear!" replied Miss Montague, "would you wish me to say? Or shall I speak
 " my

“my own sentiments?”—“O, yes!”
 cried Edelfrida, “do instruct me”.—
 “Well, then,” said Miss Montague,
 smiling through her tears, “let Lord Of-
 mond perceive in you that reviving
 esteem, which you once scrupled not to
 confess you felt for him; disappoint the
 envious and malicious writer of that
 base letter; and casting all doubt from
 your heart, make room in it once again
 for its old inhabitant, the constant
 Henry.”—“A thousand thanks to my
 kind Henrietta!” cried he, in rapture.—
 “Now, then, Edelfrida, you have received
 the advice you solicited; will you not
 let it operate on your conduct? Will
 you still preserve this killing indiffe-
 rence?”—Edelfrida timidly raised her
 head, and casting a look round her, her
 face was suffused with crimson, yet her
 eye spoke a language the enamoured Of-
 mond understood; he again took her less
 reluctant hand, and pressed it with fervor
 to his lips. Mr. Evelyne now approach-
 ed

ed them: "Hitherto," said he, with his accustomed mildness and insinuating grace, "hitherto I have foreborn to speak, "fearful of agitating my lovely friend, "and rendering her unfit for a conference "so important, by recalling to her mind "past events; but my amiable Miss Dudley must now permit me to congratulate her, my friend Osmond, and myself, on the fortunate turn of affairs; I "know," added he, "that you are superior to the little artifice of trifling "with the affection you have proved; "resume your own character, then, and "receive the penitent Henry with that "gracious sweetness which heretofore "animated your features at his approach."—"Do you, too, take part "against me?" replied Edelfrida, not displeased to be solicited to that which | her inclination prompted her to, but from which her pride and the delicacy of her sex withheld her.—"For this once," said Lady Julia, "I too plead against my
"sex;

“sex; I intreat for Osmond, dear Miss
 “Dudley: see, he lives but in the expec-
 “tation of your forgiveness.”—“My
 “forgiveness,” replied Edelfrida, resum-
 ing the native candor and dignity of her
 character, “was no sooner sought for
 “than obtained; Lord Osmond has am-
 “ply acquitted himself of all intention to
 “injure me, and I henceforth banish all
 “cold suspicion from my mind.”—“This,
 “then,” cried he, “is the happiest mo-
 “ment of my life; my Edelfrida is
 “found, and still blesses me with her
 “good opinion.”—Here his joy became
 violent; and incoherently he poured
 forth the ardent acknowledgements of his
 soul with the most rapturous enthusiasm;
 and Edelfrida was constrained to submit
 to the vehemence of his most passionate
 professions of everlasting adoration, which
 not a little disconcerted her, before so
 many spectators. Miss Montague, feel-
 ing for her distress, though rejoicing in
 her restored felicity, meditated how to
 calm

calm Osmond's transports, by calling his attention to a less agreeable subject, on which account she reminded him and Edelfrida, that great part of their history yet remained untold: "We do not yet know," said she, "how Miss Dudley was driven to the necessity of giving me an attendant so superior to my hopes and expectations;" — "But greatly inferior to your desert," replied Edelfrida, with quickness, "as I shall with gratitude ever testify." — She then briefly related the circumstances which had compelled her to quit Sir Edward Dudley's house and protection; to which every one present attended with the most indignant displeasure, at the unworthy treatment she had received; Osmond particularly, who bestowed on Lady Dudley a benediction of no very pious nature, but which his warmth of disposition extorted from him: he then mentioned the affair, of which Captain Mandeville had before given her an account, speaking of his

his seeing her in Kensington Gardens, and the fury which filled his breast on supposing her companion to be his rival; and he concluded with expressing a great esteem for Mandeville, who had removed that prejudice from his mind, which he came prepared to receive from an envious public, who beheld Edelfrida's attractions with a jealous eye, and had spread many reports to her disadvantage, which he had greedily devoured on his arrival in town, after the death of his uncle, had left his mind open to impressions of the most melancholy kind; "In consequence of Mandeville's communication," said he, "I resolved to see you; but the unexpected arrival of my mother and sisters in England, prevented my instantly seeking you, I was obliged to meet them at Calais; and having bound our mutual friend to secrecy, you were gone ere I could make an attempt to introduce myself to you once again. Mandeville I found, on my

"re-

“ return, reduced to despair by the sudden
 “ departure of your cousin, Miss Dudley;
 “ and all the information he could give
 “ me was, that you had left town; but
 “ the family were resolute in refusing to
 “ give any account of you: I then ac-
 “ companied my family to this place, hav-
 “ ing obtained a promise from him of the
 “ first intelligence he could gain of you;
 “ and I soon heard from him to say, that
 “ Mrs. Conway had received a very me-
 “ lancholy letter, but that it gave her no
 “ direction where to discover your re-
 “ treat; I did not choose to apply per-
 “ sonally to Sir Edward Dudley, till I
 “ had come to some explanation with
 “ yourself; for Mandeville could give me
 “ no insight into the letter which I sup-
 “ posed you to have dictated; so that had
 “ not the happy accident of discovering
 “ you here, in a situation, indeed, unwor-
 “ thy of you, but yet fortunate in bring-
 “ ing us together, had it not been for that,
 “ I might have sought you in vain half
 “ my

" my life, and you, my Edelfrida, might
 " have remained amongst a set of wretch-
 " es, undeserving your slightest notice, so
 " far from meriting the felicity of associ-
 " ating with you."——

CHAP.

CHAPTER XLV.

LORD Osmond had scarcely uttered the last word, in the ear of his delighted Edelfrida, ere the door opened, and in walked Lady Osmond, followed by Madame de Villeneuve; she advanced towards her son, who was by this time seated next to his adored Edelfrida on the sofa, and in a tone of voice, not expressive of the sweetest temper, she exclaimed, "Will your Lordship favour
 "me with some explanation of the extra-
 "ordinary event which has taken place,
 "I understand, from common report?"—
 "Most willingly;" replied he, rising and bowing, "I am happy, Madam, in this
 "opportunity of presenting to you one,
 "who will, ere long, I hope, claim a
 "nearer interest in your regard:" in say-
 ing

ing this, he had taken Edelfrida by the hand, who had also risen.—Lady Osmond cast on her a look of the most mortifying contempt, while her son proceeded—“ let
 “ me introduce to you, Lady Osmond,
 “ Sir Edward Dudley’s niece, and the
 “ woman who has long been in possession
 “ of my affections ; she would, I flatter
 “ myself, have been your daughter, ere
 “ this, had not an unfortunate combina-
 “ tion of circumstances postponed our
 “ union ; with not more pleasure than
 “ pride, I now, however, announce to you,
 “ that, with my dear Edelfrida’s permis-
 “ sion, it will shortly take place.”—With
 a smile of the most ineffable disdain, her
 Ladyship surveyed Edelfrida from head
 to foot, then turned her eyes upon her
 son, as if to measure him too ; and after a
 moment’s pause, she replied, “ Your
 “ Lordship has really given me a most
 “ surprising proof of that very solid and
 “ brilliant understanding, the late saga-
 “ cious General Osmond taught me to

“expect.” At this disrespectful mention
 of his uncle, Lord Osmond’s cheek flush-
 ed with resentment ; but he spoke not,
 and her Ladyship went on—“ and so, my
 “ Lord, you mean to marry an adven-
 “ turer ; a girl who has imposed a flimsy
 “ tale of romantic nonsense upon you : I
 “ am surprized you did not introduce
 “ her *en princess* : pray,” continued she,
 turning to Mr. Evelyne, “ can’t you,
 “ Sir, select from amongst the waiting
 “ gentlewomen, some fair incognito, with
 “ whom you may follow the bright exam-
 “ ple your noble friend has set you ?”—
 “ This may be very witty, Ma’am,”
 replied Lord Osmond, interrupting her,
 “ but it will neither change my purpose,
 “ nor make me a convert to your ideas of
 “ happiness, be assured. Miss Dudley
 “ is no adventurer ; she has imposed no
 “ tale upon me, but such as I know to
 “ be replete with truth and honour ; and
 “ except yourself, no person living should
 “ with impunity, utter so base, so unme-
 “ rited

“ rited a falsehood.”—“ The exception
 “ does me too much honor,” replied she,
 curtsying, with an ironical air, “ and
 “ with such a licence, I shall take the li-
 “ berty of adding a few more reflections
 “ on the subject in debate. It is true,
 “ my Lord, you are independent; you
 “ are now some months more than of age,
 “ though that joyful event has not yet
 “ been celebrated; you may, therefore, if
 “ you please, take a wife from the very
 “ dregs of the people, and so, indeed, you
 “ appear inclined; but you must not ex-
 “ pect that if you introduce a servant into
 “ your family, as Lady Osmond, that ei-
 “ I or my daughters will ever again see
 “ or hold converse with you; you are no
 “ longer my son or their brother in that
 “ case, but an alien to all your natural
 “ friends; you must expect the curse of
 “ folly and disobedience to fall on you.”—
 “ My God!” exclaimed Edelfrida, shrink-
 ing back, “ not to preserve myself from
 “ instant destruction, would I become
 “ the

“ the wretched cause of such a cala-
 “ mity ! ” — “ Regard it not, Edelfrida,”
 said Lord Osmond, still detaining her
 hand, “ and reflect that you are not at li-
 “ berty to trifle with my happiness, if
 “ your own is not worth your considera-
 “ tion. I hold little due to the passionate
 “ language of mortified ambition, and
 “ over you, the malediction, should it be
 “ pronounced, has no influence. Suffer
 “ me, Madam, if you acknowledge my
 “ independence,” added he, to his mo-
 ther, “ to enjoy the portion of happiness
 “ I have made choice of, undisturbed by
 “ these ineffectual exertions of your au-
 “ thority ; I am resolved, and if you are
 “ so cruel and unjust as to reprobate me
 “ for acting according to the dictates of
 “ honour, conscience, affection, and truth,
 “ I must learn to be content without your
 “ esteem and maternal tenderness ; but
 “ my sisters, I am convinced, will never
 “ be persuaded to think me less their
 “ brother.” — “ The Marchioness of Ar-
 VOL. III. F “ mington,”

" mington," replied Lady Osmond, " will
 " do, I presume, as she pleases in that re-
 " spect; but for your sister Julia, your
 " favorite, she has not yet cast off her
 " duty, I believe, whatever she may by a
 " bad example be induced to do: and so
 " long as she acknowledges my influence,
 " in any degree, she must cease to regard
 " you as her brother. What is become
 " of your pride, my Lord," continued
 she, " that a boyish inclination should
 " make you so wholly forgetful of your-
 " self, and the dignity of your house?
 " I conclude there is not a footman in
 " this house who has not said as many
 " soft things, in the future Lady Of-
 " mond's ear, as your Lordship; and
 " when you take your destined wife from
 " the servants hall to the altar, you can
 " scarcely refuse to admit her friends into
 " your company and confidence; her
 " ladyship would justly think you unkind
 " to banish her old companions, and
 " they themselves, too, might insolently
 " murmur

“murmur if they were excluded from the
 “the innocent participation of that be-
 “witching sweetness, that soft and irresis-
 “tible eloquence, which even the heart
 “of their Lord could not withstand.”—
 “I intreat Lady Osmond,” said he, haf-
 tily interrupting her, “that you will give
 “yourself no farther trouble on my ac-
 “count; the very just picture you have
 “already drawn, of what is to be my
 “situation, perfectly satisfies me; and be
 “assured, had I not the honour of being
 “your son, I should treat the painter and
 “the painting with equal contempt and
 “indifference; as it is, I am sorry I can-
 “not form my ideas of happiness and
 “misery, right and wrong, according to
 “your Ladyship’s; yet, notwithstanding
 “that you have wounded me where I was
 “most vulnerable, I shall never forget
 “that you are my mother; whenever
 “you condescend to alter your present
 “opinion, and acknowledge this Lady as
 “your daughter, you will find us both
 F 2 “happy

“ happy to embrace the slightest mark of
 “ your favor, as an earnest of future har-
 “ mony, and your approbation will great-
 “ ly add to our felicity; but with the
 “ great drawback of your displeasure, I
 “ must still persist in securing that bliss
 “ which I trust awaits my union with my
 “ beloved Edelfrida; and so far from be-
 “ ing disgraced by it, I consider it as my
 “ first cause of exultation, as well as my
 “ first source of rational happiness.”—

Lady Osmond was no longer able to
 command herself, or to preserve her in-
 tention of employing only the shaft of ri-
 dicule and contempt, in opposition to a
 resolution she reflected on with horror, as
 the total disgrace of her family: the lit-
 tle ground she had gained on her son by
 the means she had hitherto used to dis-
 suade him from his purpose, mortified and
 enraged her; and though she was a wo-
 man of consummate art and address, on
 most occasions, the violence of her temper
 would, on extraordinary provocations,
 shew

shew itself; ambition was her favorite passion, and to see her children in splendid situations was the first wish of her heart; therefore, though for a son, in whose education she had had no voice, from whom she had been parted for many years, and whose disposition, manner, and sentiments she disapproved, she felt no warm affections; yet she could not behold him on the point of a marriage so destructive to all her views, without making a vigorous effort to prevent it: thus foiled in her attempt, she grew outrageous; her eyes darted fire on Edelfrida, who was ready to expire with terror, and no one durst venture to interpose between two people, whose natural warmth was greatly augmented by the subject; and while Lady Osmond seemed ready to burst with the fury of contending emotions, her son became every instant more steadily determined to defend his own cause against all opposition, and to obtain a victory at all hazards. Edelfrida, now

beyond all measure alarmed, conjured Lord Osmond to relinquish all farther idea of her : “ I resign you, my Lord, I “ release you,” cried she, “ from every “ promise, from all engagement to me ; “ for Heaven’s sake make me not the “ cause of this dreadful contention ! In- “ deed it is not fit that you should take a “ wife from amongst your servants ; leave “ me, then, to the obscurity of my fate, “ nor destroy the harmony and happiness “ of your family by introducing one into “ it, who could expect nothing but scorn “ and contempt ; low as I am reduced, “ my spirit would revolt against such “ treatment ; better, therefore, not to en- “ counter it.”—“ Who shall dare,” replied he fiercely, “ to treat you with scorn “ and contempt ? Am I so tame an animal to suffer, quietly to suffer it ? No, “ Edelfrida, I will be your shield against “ such indignities ; the world shall know “ that I am neither ashamed nor afraid of “ defending the woman whose confidence “ in

“ in me merits a protection from my gra-
 “ titude and my affection more than
 “ from my pride.”—“ You shall not
 “ marry her !” exclaimed Lady Osmond,
 seizing him by the arm, “ Am I not your
 “ mother ? And have I not an undoubted
 “ claim to your obedience, both from the
 “ laws of God and man ? Therefore, un-
 “ less you can endure to hear me call
 “ down the vengeance of Heaven on your
 “ head ; unless you can bear to hear me
 “ call the Holy Saints to witness, that
 “ with my last breath I will curse you
 “ and call you my murderer—yes, wretch,
 “ parricide, to you my death shall be
 “ laid ; and to that aspiring idiot, who shall
 “ dearly pay for her presumptuous folly,
 “ when you shall desert her, spurning
 “ from you the then object of your de-
 “ testation, as much as now she is the ob-
 “ ject of your blind and shameful passion ;
 “ when in the anguish of a late repentance
 “ you behold her no more the Syren who
 “ charmed you to your ruin, but feel the

“galling chains that still bind you to
 “her.”—“Come, Edelfrida,” said Lord
 Osmond, turning to her and seizing her
 hand, “come, let us go; this is language
 “unfit for either of us to hear; reflection,
 “I hope, will shew Lady Osmond the im-
 “propriety of it.”—Edelfrida trembling,
 had shrunk behind him, listening, in in-
 expressible agony of mind, to the dread-
 ful prediction his mother had pronounced
 against her, which impressed her with an
 awful sense of terror and amazement;
 retreating, therefore, from Lord Osmond,
 and struggling to get her hand from him,
 she cried, almost breathless with agitation,
 “It would be madness to brave such a sen-
 “tence—no, Osmond; I hear swear ne-
 “ver to become your wife, till your mo-
 “ther has withdrawn that threatened,
 “fearful curse, till she consents to our
 “union, or no longer opposes it.”—
 “What have you said?” he exclaimed,
 “recall, I charge you, the rash vow, nor
 “sacrifice yourself and me to an imagi-
 “nary

"nary evil, to the dæmons of hell and
 "ambition!"—"It is past," cried she,
 faintly, "and I am the veriest wretch on
 "the face of earth; but Oh, Osmond!
 "ere we part for ever, forgive me; charge
 "me not with your misery, for the weight
 "I feel here," added she, putting her
 hands on her heart, "is already intolerable."
 "Do you, then, seriously resign
 "him?"—exclaimed Lady Osmond,
 springing forward, and taking her by the
 hand, while Lady Julia and Miss Montague
 supported her, for Osmond stood speech-
 less and motionless, like one deprived of
 all sense and recollection; the Marchion-
 ness gave free vent to her tears—Lady
 Walton was not unmoved—and Mr.
 Evelyne beheld his friend on the brink of
 destruction without power to save him,
 yet he experienced all the pain of sym-
 pathy, and all the terror of apprehended
 evils—"I do, I do," said Edelfrida, in
 answer to Lady Osmond's question, "I
 "do resign him; not for me shall he be-

“made unhappy, if my death can pre-
 “serve him; take him, then, Madam;
 “take your son, and let me fly for ever
 “from this fatal house.”—“Will you
 “trust yourself with me?” replied Lady
 Osmond, delighted at length to gain her
 point, “confide in me, and I will take
 “care of you.”—“Do with me what
 “you please;”—said Edelfrida, who now
 was almost insensible, and scarcely knew
 what she answered, or cared what became
 of her, since thus torn from Osmond.—
 “Julia and Miss Montague, then, shall
 “support you to my apartment,” return-
 ed her Ladyship, “and we will leave this
 “rash, unthinking boy to reflection.”—
 Edelfrida was now entirely passive, so that
 the two ladies, at Lady Osmond’s re-
 peated injunctions, began to move with
 her towards the door, when in the instant
 Lord Osmond, starting as from a dream,
 demanded, in the most frantic manner,
 what they were about to do with her;
 they stopped, not knowing how to pro-
 ceed,

ceed, and he, catching Edelfrida in his arms, swore she should not be taken from him, while he had life or recollection to protect her. This violence, together with what she had before undergone, totally deprived her of sense, and in his arms she became lifeless, and to all appearance dead: he carried her back to the sofa, and laying her down on it, placed himself on his knees before her, still calling on his sister, on Miss Montague, and Evelynne, to assist him in recovering her. In the midst of this scene of confusion the Marquis entered the room, and with surprise, mixed with a generous compassion, he beheld the distress which he could only in part account for; the Marchioness had thrown herself into a chair, and with her face covered with her handkerchief, her grief audibly expressed itself. Lady Osmond stood looking on with a countenance of impatient anxiety, and Madame de Villeneuve, who had been a silent and unmoved spectator of the whole, now pre-

served that *sang froid*, for which she was remarkable ; the rest were hanging over Edelfrida, applying salts to her nose, and chafing her hands and temples. Mr. Evelyne alone was employed in endeavouring to remove his friend, whose vehemence he saw, would rather retard his recovery than accelerate it.

The Marquis joined in representing the absolute necessity of leaving her quietly to the care of the ladies ; Lord Osmond was a considerable time ere he could be persuaded to trust her out of his sight ; finding, however, that she did not recover, he was at length prevailed on to quit the room ; by slow degrees she began to breath once more. The apothecary, being the only medical man in the neighbourhood, was immediately sent for, and when he came, he ordered her to be put to bed, and kept as tranquil as possible ; these instructions were instantly attended to, she was carried between two of the servants to Miss Montague's room, where
that

that lady, and Lady Julia sat by her the remainder of the day ; during which, she scarcely uttered a sentence, but sighed deeply and often. Meanwhile, Lord Osmond continued violently agitated, and it required all the influence friendship had given Mr. Evelyne over his mind, to keep him in any bounds ; he refused to see or speak to Lady Osmond, and more effectually to avoid her, he shut himself up in his own apartment, sending every five minutes to inquire after Edelfrida. The Marquis and Marchioness then apologizing to Lord and Lady Walton, and Monsieur de Sangvere, for the unavoidable neglect they experienced, made it their business to soften Lady Osmond, if possible, in favour of a marriage which her son seemed resolved upon, and to which there appeared no reasonable objection, for Edelfrida was descended from an ancient and respectable family ; she was, in herself, beautiful, elegant, and accomplished, in no common degree, and her

her accidental residence with Miss Montague, as a servant, was a matter so easily explained and accounted for, that it ought to have no weight against her. Her Ladyship attended with her wonted politeness to these intreaties and remonstrances, but it was plain to perceive, she paid little regard to the force or reasonableness of them, and having sacrificed thus much to good breeding, she retired with her friend, still resolved against all and every measure but that of separating them for ever: she dispatched one of her servants with a letter to London, but what its contents were, only she and Madame Villeneuve knew; it was however the subject of much conjecture in the family. Towards evening, Lord Osmond losing all other fears in that for Edelfrida's life, sent for his sister, and informed her, that he would have a physician immediately called in; but Lady Julia assured him, that the apothecary, who appeared sensible and intelligent, declared there was not the
 “smallest

smallest occasion, her disorder being merely the effect of a shock on the nerves, and, in a few days, if not again agitated, she would be perfectly well; somewhat more satisfied with this account, he consented to wait till the next day. Obtaining a promise from his sister, that neither she nor Miss Montague would quit Edel-frida during the night, but would send him constant messages of the state of her health, for that he would sit up in his dressing-room to receive them. Mr. Evelyne insisted on being his companion, nor could he, amidst his fears for his friend, help entertaining a few on his own account; he had contemplated the beauty and sweetness of Lady Julia, now too long to be unconcerned about her, or the opinion she might form of him: and the kind interest she took in her brother's distresses, and the tenderness with which she dedicated herself to relieve them, rendered her doubly charming in his eyes; he
could

could not, therefore, think of her being subject to the powers of such a woman as Lady Osmond, without trembling for her and himself, for he had encouraged a gentle hope, that the lovely Lady Julia did not regard him with aversion, but rather with complacency; and he had observed, that when it appeared his friend, not himself, was the lover of Edelfrida, she had recovered quickly from a sudden consternation which had seized her at first. Though Evelyne was amongst the most amiable and diffident of his sex, he was not wholly without that latent vanity which renders the observation so keen, and Lady Julia was, of her sex, one of the most captivating in mind and person, so that his growing passion was fully justified in her, and his apprehensions of losing her were not groundless, when he reflected on the opposition Lady Osmond was making to her son's union, and over him she had no authority, but over her daughter

ter she had much ; he foresaw that the difference of religion would be a sufficient plea against him, but that his want of rank, though his fortune was considerable, would destroy his hopes.

CHAPTER XLVI.

DURING the night, Edelfrida never closed her eyes, yet was she too weak and languid to speak; what she took, served to compose her spirits, though it did not make her sleep; but the too well remembered vow she had rashly made, never to marry Lord Osmond without his mother's consent, dwelt on her, and made her wretched; she resolved, however, to keep it inviolate, let what would be the consequence; for her dread of that malediction an angry parent had denounced, was so strongly impressed on her mind, that she could not venture to think of disregarding it, lest it should really draw on her devoted head the vengeance of offended Heaven, and the future loss of Osmond's affection; an evil, in her idea, insupportable, much more so than being torn from him, still possessed
of

of his unabated love, and still at liberty to nourish the darling passion in her own bosom, whatever might become of her. In such reflections, she passed the tedious night, Lady Julia and Miss Montague sitting on each side her bed. Lord Osmond was not more happy in his thoughts, he would have reasoned himself out of the idea of Edelfrida's being serious when she made her vow; but a sickly apprehension stole across his mind as he considered it; in short, weary of the night, yet fearful of what the day might bring forth, Mr. Evelyne found it impossible to compose him. About ten in the morning, Lady Walton insisted upon Miss Montague's going to bed, and she would take her place at Edelfrida's bedside; the Marchioness also promised to take Lady Julia's, and they, unaccustomed to sitting up, were constrained to yield, finding themselves ill for want of rest. Lady Osmond still remained in her own apartment, with Madame de Villeneuve; but the Marquis, with Mr. Evelyne's assistance,

sistance, dragged Osmond out of his room, and persuaded him to take a short ride in his phaeton, as he would not go to bed.

This day passed off in silence and melancholy ; the ladies were chiefly confined in Edelfrida's room, and the gentlemen devoted themselves to Lord Osmond, in hopes of diverting his mind from distressing subjects.

Edelfrida was got up to have her bed made in the evening, and taking an opiate draught, she sunk about twelve o'clock into a composed sleep, still watched by Lady Walton and two attendants, her Ladyship making it a point with every other person to go bed ; the next morning she awoke much refreshed, and desired she might get up, being weary of 'bed, and feeling herself able to undergo the fatigue of dressing very well ; she was, however, willing to make the best of herself, for her weakness appeared too plain when she attempted to rise, and not easily did

did she support herself while Mrs. Mansel put on her cloaths; it was at last accomplished, and she was led into the dressing-room between two people; here she spent this day, having always one of her kind and attentive friends with her, more particularly Lady Julia and Miss Montague, the rest rode or walked out by turns. Lord Osmond was this day only withheld from seeing her, by the representations of their mutual friends, of the danger which might attend a second agitation, till the first was more overcome; to this reason he yielded, though he could not tell why his presence should discompose her, on the contrary, he thought she ought to feel security in it; he was, however, persuaded, and Edelfrida was not again disturbed. Indeed, it was now her sole business to reconcile her mind to an eternal separation from him; the effort was severely painful, but she considered it as absolutely necessary, and while she wished to take her last leave of him, she yet trembled at

the conflict it would occasion between them; she imparted her thoughts to Lady Julia and Miss Montague, they deplored with her the violence of Lady Osmond, but they could not advise her to break the vow she had made; their own respect for such solemnities made them think with horror on violated oaths, and their ideas of duty made them tremble at the breach of it; so they indirectly rather confirmed her in her determination, not to marry without Lady Osmond's consent could be obtained, or her prohibition was withdrawn; they, however, dreaded the consequences of this determination being known to Osmond, fearing, from the violence of his affection and his temper, the most alarming desperation. "We have only
 "to hope," said Miss Montague, "that
 "when Lady Osmond finds her son's
 "happiness is no other way to be resto-
 "red, than by giving you to him, she
 "will not, surely she cannot be so very
 "obstinate as to withhold her concur-
 "rence ;

“rence; so that in the end, the violence
 “we now fear, may produce the effect
 “we most wish it should produce, that of
 “alarming a mother for the life and wel-
 “fare of an only son, and giving back our
 “amiable friends to felicity, so often
 “wrested from them on the point of pos-
 “session.” Lady Julia encouraged this
 hope; but Edelfrida sunk to the very verge
 of despair, could admit no ray of comfort
 to gild the gloom of her imagination: what
 was next to become of her too, was a matter
 of some small concern, though by no means
 to her an important one; with Miss Montague,
 she could no longer remain, neither could she
 accept of any asylum which might expose her
 constantly to the solicitation or the society of
 Lord Osmond, for she doubted her own resolu-
 tion too much, to encounter such a trial; to
 her uncle’s, she could never think of return-
 ing, neither would she throw herself a bur-
 den on Mrs. Conway’s generous friendship;
 she had no money,

or

or at most a trifling sum, where then was she then to find a home? She could not, however, dwell long on the reflection, though to every other person it might have seemed most material to her to settle the point of her future abode, as somewhere she must live; but her ideas wandered from herself to Lord Osmond, and she patiently endured the picture of his rage and grief, which her fancy presented to her.

The following morning, almost as soon as she was dressed, Lady Osmond's woman came to inquire after her health, and to beg, if she was able, that she would indulge her lady with half an hour's private conference. With trembling anxiety she returned her answer, that she was ready to receive her Ladyship whenever she pleased to honour her by a visit; and Fripon was no sooner out of sight, than sighing, she said to herself, "So, then, now my fate will be finally decided." Lady Osmond came alone, and conducting her

to

to the sofa, placed herself at her side, still holding her hand; "I am happy," said she, "to find you so well recovered; believe me, independent of your connection with my son, I will prove myself your friend, if you dare trust me:" Edelfrida bowed in silence. "You do not forget or retract," resumed Lady Osmond, "the vow you made, never to marry Osmond without my consent."—"I mean faithfully to keep it, Madam," replied Edelfrida, whose spirit a little revived to oppose the haughty condescension she expected to encounter. "What, then," said her Ladyship, "do you intend as to your future residence? Have you resolved on any plan?"—"No, Ma'am," Edelfrida coldly answered, "the time has been insufficient, and unpropitious to any calm deliberation."—"Will you permit me then to save you the trouble of deliberating, by proposing a scheme which I think will scarcely fail of meeting your ap-
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“probation, if, indeed, you are resolute
 “in avoiding Lord Osmond?” Edelfrida
 coloured from resentment, at being thus
 questioned, but at length determined to
 hear the proposal, at least, whether she
 acceded to it or not. “I have,” said
 Lady Osmond, “a friend now in Lon-
 “don, under whose protection I mean,
 “with your consent, to place you, till
 “this unfortunate passion is forgotten;
 “he is a clergyman of the church I am a
 “member of, but I pledge myself for the
 “liberty of your conscience, you shall not
 “be interrupted in your mode of wor-
 “ship; he resides too with his sister, who
 “is a widow; he regulates her domestic,
 “as well as spiritual concerns, is the guar-
 “dian to her children, and in every point
 “of view an estimable man, and a sincere
 “friend; his place of abode is in York-
 “shire, at the ancient seat of the family
 “into which his sister married; he has
 “lately been in France to fetch from
 “thence another sister, who has resided
 “many

“ many years in a convent there, but her
 “ health, and the change of affairs in that
 “ country, oblige her to return to Eng-
 “ land. They are already come, and I
 “ have my friend’s assurance, in a letter I
 “ last night received from him, that he
 “ will introduce you into the family in
 “ which he presides, and that you shall
 “ make one of it so long as it may be ne-
 “ cessary to conceal your retreat from
 “ Lord Osmond; you will be treated with
 “ kindness and respect, and for ever bind
 “ me to you. Do you approve this
 “ plan?”—“I see no alternative, Ma’am,”
 replied Edelfrida, “ or I do not flatter
 “ you that I should submit myself thus
 “ quietly, you are consequently not obli-
 “ ged to me for my compliance; I regard
 “ my vow as sacred, and therefore I re-
 “ sign myself to your pleasure.”—“ Here-
 “ after perhaps you may think differ-
 “ ently.”—“ Never,” said Edelfrida, with
 animation, “ no time or circumstance
 “ can change the habit of my mind; to

“ the hour of my dissolution, next to my
 “ God, I shall feel the most fervent affec-
 “ tion for Lord Osmond, notwithstand-
 “ ing I have rashly renounced his protec-
 “ tion.”—“ Have the prudence, how-
 “ ever,” said her Ladyship, “ to forbear
 “ these exertions, and also have the pity,
 “ both on yourself and Osmond, to avoid
 “ him ; keep your departure a secret
 “ from him as you value his life, and be
 “ ready to leave this place early to-morrow
 “ morning with me privately.”—“ To-
 “ morrow morning !” exclaimed the asto-
 nished Edelfrida, “ Oh, Heavens !
 “ what, and without seeing or speaking
 “ to him more ? Can I be guilty of
 “ such cruelty, such injustice to his
 “ tenderness ? Impossible !”—“ Then,”
 said Lady Osmond, “ my project is in
 “ vain, your agitation will discover all,
 “ and my son will so violently oppose
 “ your going, that it will prove imprac-
 “ ticable.”—“ Well, well,” cried Edel-
 frida, impatiently, and bursting into tears,
 “ I will

" I will go, and never behold him more."—
 " You may write a few lines to be given
 " him, when we are gone, if you choose
 " it," said her Ladyship.—" I thank you,
 " Madam," replied she, proudly, " for
 " this poor, this limited permission, and
 " as I owe too much, alas ! to the gene-
 " rous tenderness of your son, I shall avail
 " myself of it, to take my everlasting
 " leave of him, in lines which will but
 " weakly express the anguish of my soul ;
 " they shall, however, serve to assure him
 " of my eternal faith."—" You will be
 " ready," said Lady Osmond, paying no
 regard to what she spoke about Lord
 Osmond. " I will," returned Edelfrida,
 while the angry glow of offended pride
 dyed her otherwise pale cheek. Lady
 Osmond then said, " I now leave you to
 " prepare yourself, Fripon shall pack up
 " your cloaths in a trunk of mine to avoid
 " suspicion, and save you trouble." Edel-
 frida coldly curtsied, and Lady Osmond
 left the room. " To think," cried she,

“ were madness now, then let me make
 “ an end of the little business I have got
 “ to do, ere I go.” She then began a
 letter to Osmond, but her resolution fail-
 ed her ere she had written more than a
 few lines, and she broke off abruptly,
 leaving that fragment for his perusal,
 when she should be far off: she made
 Lady Julia and Miss Montague acquaint-
 ed with the whole scheme, on their pro-
 mise of secrecy; she obtained from the lat-
 ter also an assurance that she would inform
 her old and faithful friend, Mrs. Williams,
 what was become of her. She lay down
 for a few hours, and then refusing to eat
 any thing, she waited the hour of appoint-
 ment in a state of calm despair; when it
 came, she embraced her two kind friends,
 and followed Lady Osmond to the car-
 riage.

CHAPTER XLVII.

LADY Julia and Miss Montague saw Edelfrida depart with tears of unfeigned regret; but Lady Osmond hurried her into the chaise by five o'clock in the morning, that when her son heard she was gone, too much time might have elapsed for there being any chance of his overtaking them. In hopeless dejection, the beauteous victim of an ambitious mother, saw herself conveyed from the place, where she had unexpectedly encountered the object of her tenderest affections, and where she now believed she had seen him for the last time: she neither spoke nor shed a tear, her grief was deep in her heart, not expressed in any violent or distressing emotions. Lady Osmond exulting in the success she had scarcely dared flatter her-

self with, felt no compunction for the inhuman part she was acting; on the contrary, had her sorrowful companion been in a state of mind to make observations, she might have discovered through the veil which but thinly concealed her joy, that she considered no sacrifice of another's happiness, or even life, as any thing, when put in competition with what she deemed the honour of her family. Edelfrida was, however, dead to all outward objects; she neither saw nor heard, so much was she absorbed in her own melancholy reflections. Lady Osmond was an adept in the art of dissimulation, when she thought it necessary, and she would even now have given herself the trouble to dissemble, in order to reconcile Edelfrida to her fate, till she had her so securely disposed of, that she was in no danger of retracting her consent to the measures adopted, had she not found her alike insensible to kindness or insult, to the soothing voice of consolation, or the harsh note of reproach. She, therefore,

suffered

suffered herself to dwell solely on the fortunate turn she had given to Lord Osmond's affairs, never doubting, that when the first violence of his anger and disappointment subsided, he would thank her for having relieved him from the embarrassment of an improper engagement; what might be the consequence of the part she had acted to her miserable fellow traveller, she never gave herself leisure to consider, neither did she much regard. By means of setting out so early, they arrived in London that evening, though rather late, but her Ladyship was too fearful of delay, to admit any reason for sleeping on the road, whatever risks she might run of being robbed or terrified in travelling in the evening. No such accident, however, retarded their progress, and the carriage stopped in Bedford Square, between nine and ten o'clock. Edelfrida, who had not uttered a syllable since she left Barnly Manor, was now only just conscious of her situation; she mechanically followed Lady

Osmond into a house, at the door of which her footman had knocked, and which was no sooner opened, than a gentleman appeared, - whom her Ladyship addressed in the familiar tone of intimacy by the name of Medway; she then spoke to him in a low voice, as they stood in the hall together, and he afterwards turned to Edelfrida, saying, "Young Lady, I hope you will have no reason to repent putting yourself under my protection." Edelfrida scarcely knowing what he said, sighed, and curtsied in silence. He then desired Lady Osmond would follow the servant, who stood on the stairs, ready to shew her into the drawing-room, where an elderly lady, of a grave, but genteel appearance, received her, and Edelfrida, who pursued her steps, after the first salutation was over, and inquiries had been made and answered on all sides. Lady Osmond and Mr. Medway, who proved to be the priest and friend, of whom she had spoken before to

Edelfrida,

Edelfrida, retired to the further end of the room, and entered into a close conversation with each other, frequently looking towards the fair but unhappy subject of their discourse, whom the elderly lady, out of civility, had placed herself on the next seat to, and would have talked, but Edelfrida had not resolution to go beyond yes or no, in reply to the questions put to her; "If she had a safe and pleasant journey, found the roads good, or was ever before in London?" by way of prelude to farther conversation, which her apparent dejection however checked. Supper being announced, they all walked down into the parlour; Mr. Medway placed Lady Osmond on one side, the mistress of the house, Edelfrida on the other, and himself at the bottom of the table; a grave and reserved air marked the character of this gentleman, partly assumed, perhaps, in conformity to the solemn dignity of his profession; yet he now and then cast a look upon Edel-

frida, during which momentary observation his features were softened and relaxed into the mildness of compassion ; in a gentler tone, too, he asked her to eat, and recommended the most delicate thing on the table to her, with a solicitude, rather the effect of good nature than ceremony : he appeared to be about forty years of age, or something less, but the gravity of his dress and deportment might add a few years to his looks.

Edelfrida remained alike inattentive to his civilities, to those of the lady of the house, and to Lady Osmond's attempts to draw her out of that melancholy humour ; she returned their attentions without rudeness or contempt, indeed, but she refused their invitations to partake of the supper, or the conversation, till at length conquered by repeated intreaties, she made an effort to swallow a bit of chicken Mr. Medway had put on her plate ; but finding it in vain to contend with feelings which robbed her of all power,

er, either mental or corporeal, she again laid down her knife and fork, and burst into tears. Mr. Medway called for a glass of wine, and presented it to her in a manner, which bespeaking her gratitude, subdued her reluctance, and she took it from a wish to shew him she was not insensible to kindness, though lost to all comfort. "She is fatigued with her journey," said Lady Osmond, hoping to take off the strangeness of her distress by this means, "had you not better retire?" continued her Ladyship, "Mrs. Marchall will excuse you, I am certain."—"I beg," replied Mrs. Marchall, "that the young lady will consider herself at home, and do as she feels herself inclined; shall I order my maid to attend you to your room?"—"If you please, Ma'am," returned Edelfrida, faintly. The maid was then called for, and Edelfrida rising, curtsied and withdrew, glad to escape farther observation, and be left at liberty to indulge the sorrow which now made its way

way from her heart to her eyes, and convulsed her whole frame. Mrs. Marchall's maid would have assisted her to undress, but she declined the offer, impatient to be alone. She then threw herself on the bed, incapable of the exertion necessary to take off her cloaths, though this was the second night since she had undressed herself, or enjoyed the comfort of sleep, except for a few hours, broken and disturbed by the perturbation of her mind; nothing was less likely than that now she should find the rest which had so long forsaken her; for the torrent of affliction which had been collecting in her bosom, burst forth, at length, with irresistible violence, and she yielded herself to it, with all the energy of a disposition prone to impetuosity; she sobbed aloud, unable to restrain the grief, which in mercy to her life or her senses, nature kindly prompted to vent itself, having too long already weighed heavily on her heart. Thus freely did she pour forth her sorrows;

rows; she even scarcely refrained from calling on Lord Osmond, and deploring the cruelty of her destiny in audible complainings; so trifling did every other consideration seem to her, when compared to her miseries which occupied all her thoughts. To this storm, which agitated every nerve, a calm succeeded, as it were, to give exhausted nature leisure to recruit herself. During this suspension of the tears and sighs which rent her breast, she heard, or thought she heard, from an adjoining room, a mournful sound which seemed in sympathy with her feelings; she listened more attentively, and plainly distinguished that the person who occupied the next chamber was like herself, the victim of remorseless sorrow, which, like her, she wept and lamented; it was a female voice, and the tone of it was low and plaintive in the extreme, as it murmured forth the feelings of its mistress. I am not, then, single in wretchedness, said Edelfrida to herself, even this house

con-

contains another, perhaps, equally unfortunate.—She now no more expressed her grief aloud, respect for the misfortunes of her unknown neighbour withheld her, and as she lay revolving in her mind the various and poignant miseries of this mortal life, sleep kindly and imperceptibly stole over her harrassed senses, and for a short season lulled all her cares to rest. But, alas! the moment she opened her eyes on the light once more, all the images of despair, which had been banished for a while, “recurred with aggravated force:” they crowded back upon her mind, and again tortured and depressed her. She rose, and walking carelessly to the glass, she started as her eyes surveyed her own figure; her pale, dejected, inanimate countenance, and the comfortless disorder of her whole dress and appearance struck her. She felt, however, the indecorum of presenting herself to the family in that condition; she, therefore, though slowly and languidly, began to pull off her
cloaths

cloaths in order to put them on again more fit to appear below stairs when called to breakfast ; her usual alacrity was no more, and with difficulty she accomplished her design : while she was thus employed, she heard voices in the next room, and the same melancholy sound again met her ear, and again revived her compassion for those who, like herself, were unhappy. She had re-dressed herself near an hour, when Mrs. Marchall's maid knocked at her door to tell her breakfast was ready, she instantly opened it, and descended, as she was directed, into the drawing room, where she found Lady Osmond, Mrs. Marchall, Mr. Medway, and a stranger, whom, the minute she cast her eyes upon, she conjectured to be her sorrowful neighbour ; they encountered each other's looks at the same minute, and both seemed to say—" I hail you as " my companion in adversity," though neither spoke to the other. Edelfrida having received the usual morning compliments,

pliments, from the three first mentioned persons, and a silent move from the stranger, placed herself at the table, and more particularly remarked the figure, which discovered evident symptoms of a deep affliction; the whole *contour* of this still beautiful female exhibited a meek sadness, a settled melancholy, which interested Edelfrida in no common degree; perhaps a similitude of conditions, as she thought, might heighten the glow of compassion which filled her bosom as she beheld the mournful stranger, mournful in outward habit as well as in the habit of her soul. She was dressed in black, something resembling, though not exactly, the dress of a nun; her cap shewed but little of her face, yet that little bespoke admiration and pity at once, and like the bending willow, her person inclined forwards in a drooping position. Mr. Medway, turning to Edelfrida, said, “ I hope you
 “ will not find yourself incommoded by
 “ travelling about thirty miles to-day,
 “ or,

“ or, perhaps, if we find it convenient,
 “ we may go on to Biggleswade; pro-
 “ vided I do not fatigue my fellow tra-
 “ vellers too much, I shall be eager to
 “ pursue my journey expeditiously, as I
 “ know our arrival will be impatiently ex-
 “ pected at Rushworth Abbey, where,”
 added he, “ I shall be happy to introduce
 “ you to my sister, Lady Rushworth, who,
 “ as my ward, will welcome you, and for
 “ your own merit, I doubt not, will respect
 “ you, when I shall tell her how nobly
 “ you have combated inclination with
 “ duty, and when she finds that, though
 “ severe the trial, yet you resolve vir-
 “ tuously to sustain it.”—“ If Lady
 “ Rushworth receives me on your account,
 “ Sir,” replied Edelfrida, “ it is all I
 “ have any right to expect from her; I
 “ will not receive a praise I have so little
 “ title to, I have neither nobly combated,
 “ nor do I virtuously sustain the trial;
 “ bound by a rash vow, I am compelled
 “ to submit to a destiny, against which I
 “ must

" must ever murmur ; and though I dare
 " not violate the sacred obligation, I feel
 " the weight of it insupportable."—
 " Leisure and reflection," said Mr. Med-
 way, in return, " and the wholesome
 " truths it is my duty to inculcate, inde-
 " pendent of the serious and important
 " subject on which I have given my word
 " to Lady Osmond, never to persecute
 " you, will, I hope, chase from your
 " mind all these wild and tumultuous
 " emotions which are as destructive to
 " happiness as they are to virtue, and in
 " time, I trust, if we differ at all, it will
 " be only on the prohibited point of dis-
 " cussion. The place," continued he,
 " the family, and the calm regularity of
 " life into which you are going, will all
 " conspire to regulate your mistaken ideas
 " of human felicity ; calamities patiently
 " endured, wrongs piously forgiven, and a
 " life of unmerited sorrow, if we may, in-
 " deed, justly say, that mortals ever suf-
 " fer undeservedly, shall be set before
 " you,

“you, that you may make a comparison
 “so much in your favor, as to instruct
 “you in humility and submission to your
 “happier lot. Here sits one,” said he,
 pointing to the dejected stranger, “whom
 “sorrow, like the unwholesome shades
 “of night, has overtaken, at an early pe-
 “riod, and clouded in all her brighter
 “prospects; she shall help me to teach
 “you to be content and patient.”—
 “Though not deaf to reproof,” returned
 Edelfrida, in a spiritless tone of voice,
 “yet I fear you will find me too weak
 “and volatile to profit by it; you will
 “also find, or I know nothing of myself,
 “that these are impressions which the
 “hand of death can only efface from my
 “heart.”—“We must first try to mode-
 “rate that sensibility, which deserves our
 “censure rather than our commenda-
 “tion,” said he, “when it corrodes and
 “saps the foundation of our tranquillity
 “by the nourishment of some unhappy
 “passion, instead of being an incitement
 “to

“ to deeds of soft compassion and heaven-
 “ born charity ; this accomplished, we
 “ must next direct it to its proper course,
 “ and as it flows in streams of sweet be-
 “ nevolence, it will cleanse the heart of all
 “ its baser matter, and heal those wounds
 “ which now oppress it with pain and
 “ grief ; ’tis then only that sensibility is
 “ praise-worthy ; ’tis thus only it should
 “ be indulged, for otherwise it weakens
 “ and destroys, what it was implanted in
 “ us to promote ; pity for the unfortunate,
 “ and humanity to all that live, particu-
 “ larly our fellow-creatures, they have the
 “ first right to our consideration, though
 “ the animals which the great Creator
 “ gave for our use and pleasure should be
 “ ever remembered with a proper kind-
 “ ness, as creatures on whom we are de-
 “ pendent for much comfort and conveni-
 “ ence, and to whom we, therefore, owe
 “ a return of gratitude : the man who
 “ can coolly abuse the animal who so
 “ largely contributes to his benefit and
 I “ amuse-

“ amusement, gives me a bad idea of his
 “ disposition, and induces me to believe
 “ that his tyranny would extend still far-
 “ ther, if fear did not withhold him ; but
 “ this subject,” added he, “ has carried
 “ me from the point, I perceive ; we will,
 “ however, wave, for the present, all far-
 “ ther discourse, and prepare ourselves,
 “ if you please, for a speedy departure ;”
 then looking at his watch, he said, “ the
 “ carriage will be here in half an hour,
 “ ’tis now near ten o’clock, are you ready
 “ to set out both of you ?”—Edelfrida
 and the other lady replied in the affirma-
 tive. Mr. Medway then left the room,
 and Mrs. Marchall addressing the stran-
 ger by the title of Mrs. Villers, asked if
 she found herself equal to the fatigue of
 travelling so far as Biggleswade, “ If you
 “ you do not, my dear,” said she, “ let
 “ me speak to your brother, for you are
 “ so passive, that I question if you were
 “ ready to expire, whether you would ex-
 “ press a wish to rest.”—“ My brother,
 “ Ma-

“Madam,” replied she, “is very kind
 “and considerate, he will not hurry me,
 “I am certain, and I am very anxious
 “to find myself at Rushworth Abbey,
 “’tis so long since I have enjoyed the
 “consolation of a sister’s society, death
 “having deprived me of one, and the
 “other being at too great a distance, and
 “bound by conjugal and maternal ties to
 “one kingdom, where, it seemed once,
 “I should never return.”—“I hope my
 “dear,” returned Mrs. Marchall, “you
 “will find much comfort in the abode to
 “which you are going; Lady Rushworth
 “will, no doubt, make it her study to
 “cheer the rest of a life, marked by too
 “much misery already, and the peaceful
 “retirement of her habitation will be well
 “suited to one who has renounced the
 “world and its vanities.”—Mrs. Villers
 wept, Lady Osmond read the newspaper,
 Edelfrida gazed on the beauteous mour-
 ner, with eyes moistened by the melting
 sympathy of her soul. The whole party
 were,

were, however, instantly roused to action by a chaise driving to the door; it was that destined to carry Edelfrida and her companions into Yorkshire; the luggage was immediately fastened on, while Mr. Medway stood to direct and quicken the movement of the servants. As soon as all was ready, he returned to the drawing room to take leave of Mrs. Marchall and Lady Osmond, and to conduct his fellow-travellers to the carriage; Mrs. Marchall with tenderness embraced Mrs. Villers, and bade adieu to Mr. Medway; Lady Osmond addressed herself to Edelfrida, saying, "You have allowed me to constitute my friend, your guardian, and in that capacity you will, I am sure, have no reason to complain of him; you will find him kind and properly indulgent, and I depend upon your promise to let your retreat remain a secret to every person, whether of my family or your own, till the reason for such concealment is done away."—"I have

“promised, Ma’am,” replied Edelfrida,
 coldly, “and I shall respect the promise ;
 “I have but one friend in my own fami-
 “ly who would be at the trouble of in-
 “quiring me out, and unless I could give
 “a better account of myself than I fear
 “I shall ever be able to do, I have no
 “desire to give her pain by a relation of
 “my miseries.”—“It will be your own
 “fault,” returned Lady Osmond, “if
 “you are not happy under Mr. Medway’s
 “protection and in Lady Rushworth’s
 “family, where, that you may want none
 “of the little appendages necessary to the
 “respectable station you will fill there,
 “you will do me the favour to accept an-
 “nually a token of my friendship, and
 “the obligation you have laid me under ;
 “my friend, at my request, will deliver
 “it to you.”—“I must confess,” said
 Edelfrida, “that to incur a debt of grati-
 “tude to your Ladyship, is an additional
 “grievance to me, yet as you have put it
 “out of my power to avoid it, by thus
 “dis-

“ disposing of me, I fear I must owe to
 “ you the few things I shall require to
 “ render my appearance such as may not
 “ justly offend the lady in whose house I
 “ am to reside on the footing of equality
 “ in some degree; therefore, so far I con-
 “ sent to be obliged, no farther.”—“ It
 “ shall be as you please,” replied Lady
 Osmond, “ and now, adieu; had it been
 “ consistent with the duty I owe Lord
 “ Osmond’s memory, be assured I would
 “ not have opposed your happiness, as
 “ you seem to think an union with my
 “ son would have secured it; recollect,
 “ however, that he is a violent, inconsi-
 “ derate young man, and when time had
 “ aided his reason, he might have regret-
 “ ted his hasty engagement; where then
 “ would have been your felicity? Re-
 “ flect on this, and, if possible, acquit
 “ me of cruelty, at least give me credit
 “ for acting according to the dictates of
 “ my best judgement.”—Edelfrida re-
 plied not, but withdrawing the hand her

Ladyship had taken, she gravely curtsied, and turning to Mrs. Marchall paid her parting compliments to her, then attended Mr. Medway and Mrs. Villers to the chaise, in which they were all three presently seated, and orders being given to drive on, Edelfrida once more left London, in a frame of mind by no means enviable; they were quickly out of the town, and she cast her eyes back upon it, as it were, to take a last look, for she was fully persuaded, that fortune having given the final blow to her expectations, she must henceforth spend her days in solitude and melancholy. Mrs. Villers, with less enthusiasm, seemed not less wretched, but Edelfrida had a soul superior to receiving consolation from the misfortunes of another, even had that other been her enemy; as it was, her feelings were rendered more acute, from the observations she was compelled to make on her fellow traveller's fate.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LADY Osmond and Mrs. Marchall stood at the window some minutes after the chaise was out of sight, then returning to their seats, they entered into a grave discourse on the merits of the cause her Ladyship had engaged in, in order to preserve her son from an improper alliance.

Mrs. Marchall, whose religious opinions were the same as those Lady Osmond professed, more readily coincided in all her other sentiments, and being past the season for love to influence the mind and understanding, she was induced to think Edelfrida much more properly disposed of than in an union with Lord Osmond ; besides which, her high idea of the virtues of Mr. Medway and Lady Rushworth, made her consider a residence

with them as a state of felicity equal to any thing on earth, and being both a pious and benevolent woman, she flattered herself that the force of precept and example would recal the young woman from the paths of error into which her education had plunged her: "I think," added she, "I never beheld a more lovely creature, your son is, therefore, to be more easily excused for fixing his affections so inconsiderately, though it would have been a bad reason for your Ladyship, as a mother, to give in defence of yourself, had you permitted his marriage with her; 'tis pity, however, that so much external perfection should inclose a mind fraught with error and misery; I trust our worthy friend, Mr. Medway, will be able to reform and render it as lovely as her person and countenance, which, though obscured by melancholy, appears, even in my eyes, captivating beyond measure."—"My son would adore you," replied Lady Osmond,

Osmond, smiling, " if he heard you praise
 " his idol, who really is beautiful, and,
 " therefore, more dangerous, you know ;
 " had she been homely, I had had no-
 " thing to fear ; but I join with you in
 " wishing that our friend Medway may
 " make a convert of her, notwithstanding
 " she has given me a great deal of trou-
 " ble and vexation, and alienated Lord
 " Osmond's affection from me without
 " doubt ; I fancy I shall find on my re-
 " turn to Barnly Manor no small confu-
 " sion ; they all unite against me there,
 " except Madame de Villeneuve, and to
 " her good wishes I can alone be indebt-
 " ed, for her opinion would be treated
 " with disdain, I know. I hope, how-
 " ever, to give her some consequence,
 " ere long, with one of my family at
 " least ; Julia is to be united to her son as
 " soon as matters can be arranged, after
 " his arrival in England, which is now
 " daily expected, for I am resolved not
 " to run the risk of her making a choice

“ in this country, where there are so few
 “ men of rank of the same church to
 “ which we are irrevocably attached
 “ while we live, and in which we hope to
 “ die.”—Mrs. Marchall crossed herself,
 and ejaculated a short prayer to Heaven,
 that none of the members of the Catholic
 church might ever be tempted to forsake
 it; it was the pious effusion of the most
 benevolent charity and good will, and,
 therefore, did her honour, while Lady
 Osmond derived little credit from her re-
 ligious attachments; pride, avarice, and
 ambition, mixing too much in all her
 motives and actions, to render them wor-
 thy of respect. These ladies continued
 their conversation till the morning was
 far advanced, then her Ladyship request-
 ed leave to order Mrs. Marchall’s chariot,
 to take her to her milliner’s, and to some
 other places she wished to visit during her
 short stay in town; her own carriage was
 merely a travelling chaise, she, therefore,
 could not make use of it well in the streets
 of

London. The chariot being now at the door, Lady Osmond set out by herself, insisting that Mrs. Marchall, who was old and infirm, should not use the ceremony of attending her; she gave directions to her footman to instruct the coachman to drive immediately to Pallmall, which he did, and as she stopped at a place almost opposite the Royal Hotel, while she sat in the carriage waiting for a person she was to speak to, she accidentally cast her eyes to the other side the street, and was struck with a gentleman, whose figure so nearly resembled that of young de Villeneuve, that she was persuaded it could be no other person. She instantly sent her servant to inquire if there was a French gentleman of that name in the hotel, and he returned with an answer that there was not; there were no French gentlemen at all there except one, who came the day before with his wife and another lady, and whose name was Vallville. Lady Osmond, still doubting, kept her eyes upon the win-

dow at which she had first seen him, but on being observed, he had walked away, and in his place a very young lady appeared, who seemed to regard Lady Osmond with attention; the person just then coming to the chariot window, she finished her business in Pallmall presently, then ordered them to drive up St. James's Street, Piccadilly, still puzzled with the likeness she had beheld, to Monsieur de Vileneuve, and still only half persuaded that it was not himself, yet why he should wish to be concealed, or why go by another name, she could form no conjecture; so, at length, giving up the idea, she resolved to believe it was not him. Having made an end of what called her out, she returned to dinner into Bedford Square, and spent the remainder of the day with Mrs. Marchall only.

The next morning she began her journey back to Barnly Manor, but performed it much less expeditiously than when she came to town, being in no haste to encounter

counter the resentment of Lord Osmond, which she knew, from the nature of the provocation, as well as from the warmth of his temper, would be violent; indeed, she scarcely ever expected, unless through the mediation of Lady Julia, to be reconciled to him; for though he made an evident point of treating her as his mother, with respect, she was certain he had imbibed no very flattering opinion of her from his uncle, to whom she was an object of severe disapprobation at all times, and on all occasions, and who openly lamented her connection with his brother, as destructive to family harmony.

Lady Osmond reached Barnly Manor on the evening of the second day, and, to her great relief, found that her son had left the place the day before, from a determination not to see her on her return, fearing to trust himself in her presence, while every angry passion was at war in his bosom. The rest of the party received her less pleasantly than usual,

except Madame de Villeneuf, but they all earnestly inquired how Edelfrida bore her journey, and how she was when her Ladyship left her; piqued at the preference these eager inquiries gave to Edelfrida's cause, Lady Osmond but slightly replied to them, and then retired to a private conference with her friend, from whom she learnt, that when Lord Osmond discovered the departure of Edelfrida, he raved like one distracted, ordered his servants and horses to follow her, then forbade the order, and sunk into the most sullen state of dejection, out of which he was at length roused by the paper she had left behind for him, and over which he shed a torrent of tears; that in short, it was the business of the whole house, herself excepted, to sooth, console, and watch him, particularly Lady Julia and Mr. Evelyne; and, added this cunning French woman, "*entre nous*, my
 " dear Lady, I suspect there is a growing
 " attachment there; they are too amiable
 " to

“ to be left so much together, I dread the
 “ consequences: I wonder what keeps Vil-
 “ leneuf—foolish boy! while he loiters, the
 “ prize which I have fixed my heart upon
 “ for him, may be snatched by another
 “ more fortunate.”—“ Never,” cried
 Lady Osmond, with vehemence, “ I will
 “ move heaven and earth, rather than my
 “ daughter shall marry an heretic; have
 “ I not conquered in a much more arduous
 “ undertaking? What need to doubt or
 “ fear, when we have to deal with one who
 “ is all gentleness, all duty, and respect
 “ for my authority?”—“ True, my good
 “ friend,” replied Madame de Villeneuf,
 “ but we are apt to be apprehensive, where
 “ we are so deeply interested as I am in
 “ the union between my son and Lady
 “ Julia, the most amiable as the most
 “ lovely creature in the universe, and
 “ withal your daughter; can I then help
 “ being anxious?”—“ Your anxiety does
 “ us both honour,” returned Lady Os-
 mond, “ and rest assured, you shall not
 “ be

“be disappointed; but say, can you tell
 “me where Osmond is gone?”—“To
 “Osmond Castle, I fancy,” she replied;
 “so I understand from your woman, who
 “heard it amongst the servants: I make
 “no inquiries of the higher powers, for they
 “already regard me with a jealous eye.
 “The Marchioness is indeed polite, and
 “my sweet Lady Julia uniformly obliging
 “in her manners; but I question if ever
 “she would give me any information,
 “and for the rest, I am certain they would
 “not. Miss Montague evidently avoids
 “me, as though I were the first cause of
 “their displeasure.”—“Miss Montague,
 “though extolled almost above humanity
 “by her friends,” replied Lady Osmond,
 “never was any favourite of mine; with
 “affected humility, she presumes on her
 “independence, or I greatly mistake her
 “character; nor do I approve of her for
 “Julia’s bosom friend, yet their near re-
 “lationship puts it out of my power to
 “break the connection; besides which,
 “I think

“ I think her large fortune an object to
 “ to my son ; a man of his rank ought to
 “ have a splendid income and splendid
 “ ideas, which, however, I am sorry to
 “ say, Osmond has not ; he is quite an
 “ Englishman, the character I detest ; he
 “ is an enthusiastic adorer of what the
 “ senseless multitude stile liberty, and
 “ worship as their idol ; he has more use-
 “ less knowledge than politeness ; more
 “ generosity, as it is called, than prudence ;
 “ and too much sincerity for any but the
 “ golden age, which, as he unfortunately
 “ does not live in, it would be wiser to
 “ accommodate himself to the ways of
 “ this. I wonder,” added she, “ he did
 “ not take his friend Mr. Evelyne with
 “ him.”—“ Ah,” cried Madame de Vil-
 leneuf, “ he is too much a lover himself,
 “ to tear his friend from the shrine of his
 “ devotion ; whatever Lady Julia’s senti-
 “ ments may be, Mr. Evelyne certainly
 “ entertains for her the most ardent affec-
 “ tion.”—“ So long,” returned Lady Os-
 mond,

mond, smiling, "as he does not impart it
 "to her breast, we will be content that he
 "should do homage to beauty and vir-
 "tue, as devoutly as he pleases; though
 "really it tis pitiful, wondrous pitiful,
 "that the youth should waste his vows
 "and sighs in vain; he has graces of soul
 "and form, to charm the heart of woman,
 "it must be confessed, and I wish him
 "success, with any and with every wo-
 "man, save my gentle Julia; she is al-
 "ready destined for, I hope, at least his
 "equal."—"I hope so too," said Madame
 de Villeneuve; "as a mother, I may be
 "partial, but, to my fond imagination,
 "Villeneuve promised to possess those qua-
 "lities and accomplishments which are
 "necessary to fit him for the husband of
 "a Lady Julia; two years absence has, I
 "flatter myself, rather improved than di-
 "minished his endowments, both natural
 "and acquired, or I shall be grievously
 "mortified and disappointed in my son."—
 "Whatever he is," replied Lady Osmond,
 "if

“ if he has not dissipated his fortune, and
 “ turned apostate to his religion, he shall
 “ still marry my daughter; for notwith-
 “ standing that I think her worthy of su-
 “ perior excellence, I shall be happy to
 “ give her to a man of honour, possessed
 “ of the means to support her rank, and
 “ not endanger her faith.—You appre-
 “ hend no opposition from your son?”
 said Lady Osmond, looking attentively
 at her friend.—“ None in the world,”
 cried Madame de Villeneuve, “ could I
 “ suppose him so destitute of understand-
 “ standing, so wanting both to himself
 “ and me, as to hesitate for an instant, I
 “ would renounce him, cast him off, and
 “ reprobate him for ever; but I know it
 “ is impossible, educated in the habits of
 “ passive obedience to me, he could never
 “ summon courage to oppose my com-
 “ mands; and when we consider the
 “ beauty, the merit, and the fortune of
 “ the object of my choice, how can we
 “ doubt for a moment his most ready and
 “ joyful

“joyful concurrence? Have you any rea-
 “son for the question?” demanded she,
 with apparent anxiety.—“No, my good
 “friend,” returned Lady Osmond, di-
 verted at her eagerness, “I have not; but
 “you must know, I took into my head that
 “I saw Villeneuve standing in a window at
 “the Royal Hotel, and as he was expected;
 “I did not think it was so very improba-
 “ble his being there, you know, in con-
 “sequence then of this fancy of mine, I
 “sent to inquire, but, behold, the gentle-
 “man’s name was Vallville, and he had a
 “wife with him, which put it out of all
 “dispute.”—“Oh, certainly,” cried
 Madame de Villeneuve, resuming her won-
 ted ease; “I think, however, my son has
 “yet no wife; that happiness I hope soon
 “to present him with myself, and receive
 “his grateful acknowledgements, or at
 “least to share them with you, my best
 “friend.”

Thus did these two ladies settle the
 matter to their entire satisfaction; mean-
 while,

while, Lady Julia and Mr. Evelyne had other ideas and other hopes; they entertained for each other an affection not less pure than animated; and Mr. Evelyne, with the qualifications already ascribed to him, being the heir of an ancient and respectable, though not a noble family, and possessing a considerable fortune, ventured to indulge the hope, that the sister of his friend would not deem him too presumptuous if he aspired to the honour of her hand, having received every encouragement from Lord Osmond he could desire, and remaining now at Barnly Manor with the express intention of making a still deeper interest in the heart of the lovely Lady Julia, who blushing, confessed to Miss Montague, that she had unwarily disposed of her affections, ere she knew they were in danger. Miss Montague, who passionately loved her, and to whom her happiness was a subject of the warmest concern, trembled while she approved her choice; she foresaw the opposition Lady
Osmond

Osmond would make to it, and she knew the timidity of her friend, and the ideas she entertained of filial duty, too well not to fear she would yield her happiness in the contest, rather than offend her mother by an act of disobedience. Yet, notwithstanding she justly dreaded the result of an eclairsissement on this subject, she could not prevail upon herself wholly to destroy the felicity her two amiable friends enjoyed in the society of each other. She had penetrated into Madame de Villeneuve's character, and found that she was prying and curious to discover the sentiments of all parties; while she wished to appear totally unconcerned, she had observed her mark the attentions of Evelyne to Lady Julia, with a scrutinizing exactness, and, she made no doubt, but that all her discoveries were immediately conveyed to Lady Osmond. This accounted for the little inclination Miss Montague ever shewed to cultivate an intimacy with Madame de Villeneuve; for she was too sincere, of
too

too independent a spirit to act in contradiction to her feelings and sentiments. Some days passed at Barnly Manor after Lady Osmond's return there, without any intelligence arriving of Lord Osmond, which, together with other unpleasant reflections, created a reserve unfavourable to mirth or sociability. The Marchioness generally rode out on horseback, or in her phaeton, attended by Monsieur de Sangvere; the Marquis and Lord Walton conversed, walked, or rode together; Lady Walton and Miss Montague selected themselves in their frequent rambles, to leave Lady Julia and Mr. Evelyn at liberty to entertain one another; and Lady Osmond, with her friend, were left to plan their schemes unmolested: still, to their great surprize, young de Villeneuve did not come, though his mother hourly expected him.

At length a letter from Lord Osmond was delivered to Mr. Evelyn, the contents were, however, communicated, in
 10 part,

part, to all the house, and in full to two or three of his friends, including Lady Julia, who read it with no small emotion.

“**TO FREDERIC EVELYNE, Esq.**

“**DEAR EVELYNE,**

“**JUDGING** of your impatience by my own, to learn some tidings of the absent, I will, though all unfit for the employment, endeavour to give some account of myself. How I got here, I am not qualified to tell you, farther than that I am here in personal safety, though with an aching heart. During the journey, I was insane, and I believe the poor fellow who attended me in the carriage was not a little alarmed, both for himself and me; had I unfortunately met Lady Osmond, (for I cannot call her my mother any more) on the road, I know not to what act of desperation I might have been hurried by the distraction of my mind: I am glad I did not encounter her, for I do not wish to insult her. Torn by that anguish
of

of soul, to which death is greatly preferable, I at length got to London, and nature being exhausted by these violent emotions, I once more became calmly wretched.

“ My man discovered that some of my old associates were still in town, and hoping to divert my melancholy, he pressed me to let him inform them of my being there; but starting at the idea of being tormented with unmeaning visitors, I charged him, on his life, not to mention my arrival out of the house where I lodged. I dreaded the thoughts of being seen by any of those gay dissipated fellows, who, had they known the cause of my distress, would probably have ridiculed it unmercifully, and I was in no humour to endure such impertinent folly; neither did I wish to render Lady Osmond a subject for censure, satire, or wit, though she has wronged me beyond all forgiveness, unless she restores my Edelfrida to me: neither will I bear to have the name of her I love, made
the

the sport of fools and coxcombs ; I will not wound the delicacy of her character, neither will I tamely suffer any other person to do so, though, Heaven knows, I have but little prospect of ever having her restored to me. To avoid the plague of arguing with those who would have reasoned with feelings like mine, on the absurdity of indulging sorrow for the loss of one woman, while there were yet hundreds perhaps equally, in their estimation, desirable ; and to escape the more boisterous treatment of others, I resolved to leave town immediately, and pursue my intention of going down to Osmond Castle. Mandeville was not in London, the only man whose company I could have endured ; so that ordering my carriage next morning, I threw myself into it, and like a mere machine, was brought here, where, at least, I can indulge my grief undisturbed.

Oh, Evelynne ! what a gay and flattering prospect of happiness broke in upon
me

me in a moment, after the most gloomy discontent had occupied my mind! I vainly thought felicity was my own, but ere I could seize the offered boon, the deceitful phantom disappeared, and the demon of discord, who presided at my birth, blasted all my joys; but why, still more to curse me, should the malignant spirit present itself in the form of a mother? Of what value to me is the rank and the fortune Lady Osmond is so solicitous to guard and augment? Can she imagine, that I will allow her to offer my hand in sale to some rich heiress, who might buy it with her wealth for the paltry consideration of a worthless title? No, by Heavens, rather perish the name of Osmond for ever, it shall not play the tyrant over me! Is it not all folly, vanity, and vexation of spirit? What compensation can be offered me for the wounds inflicted on my peace, for the cruelty practised on the woman I adore? My Edelfrida's last remembrance of me, the precious

fragment of her love, which she left behind her, is my bosom friend, I would not part with it for the riches of the East; though it unmans me, whenever I cast my eyes upon it, the burning tear of sorrow, tenderness, and resentment, all united, stains my cheek. Yes, Evelyne, I still weep over it like an infant, converse with it with as much eagerness as if it could reply to me, and press it to my throbbing heart, as though it were sensible of my emotions: with what a shock has the fabric of my happiness fallen to the earth, never, more, perhaps to be raised! I cannot patiently sustain it! If my senses fail not, my heart will break! Yet, while I linger on this wretched globe, your welfare will ever interest me: tell me, then, how I can contribute to secure to you the bliss I have had rudely torn from me. You love Julia, and, if I mistake not, she returns the passion; but will not Lady Osmond again interpose, and destroy your scheme of happiness, as she has done mine?

mine? Have a care, Evelyne, be quick, and make an impression on my sister's mind, which even parental authority may find it impossible to erase: tell Julia, I conjure her not to trifle with her own, or your peace of mind; bid her turn her eyes on me, and tremble, if she submits to an ambitious mother's will. Could there be the shadow of an objection made to your character, your family, or your fortune, I would acquit Lady Osmond, should she refuse you her consent; but, as it is, I know no man so worthy of Julia as yourself; I have tried you by long experience, and found you every way superior to all the men I ever yet heard of, or conversed with. Let not this appear to you like flattery, for I scorn the language of adulation, neither could I fawn or cringe, though it were to regain my Edelfrida, the first of human blessings. I have not been unmindful of you, even amidst the tortures I endure; I have resolved, in consideration of your interest,

to wave my strong objection to invite Lady Osmond here, or rather to renew the invitation I had before given her and the party at Barnly Manor: I shall not write to either her or them; they all know my sentiments towards them, and if they will accept the invitation through you, well; if not, they must remain where they are, for I am not now disposed to exert myself to any extraordinary degree of politeness. I can write no more, all my faculties seem condensing every moment into the most death-like stupidity; but, while I have the power, believe me, I shall never want the inclination to subscribe myself your faithful

OSMOND."

When Mr. Evelyne gave this letter to Lady Julia, he said, " though the partial
 " friendship of Lord Osmond has bestow-
 " ed unmerited praise on me, and still
 " kindly seeks to add unmerited felicity,
 " yet, believe me, Lady Julia, I am not
 " so

“so presumptuous as to lay claim to
 “one or the other; however I may
 “hope, I cannot but feel myself un-
 “deserving of your approbation. Who
 “is there,” he continued, respectfully ta-
 king her hand, “who is there, that has any
 “title to the bliss of possessing your ef-
 “teem, your affection?” Lady Julia,
 covered with confusion, took the letter.
 “Mr. Evelyne,” whispered she, “my
 “brother’s friendship for you justifies my
 “good opinion, and I dare believe you will
 “never forfeit it; but, without my mo-
 “ther’s consent,”—“Stop,” cried he,
 hastily interrupting her, “make no reso-
 “lutions, my dear Lady Julia, recollect
 “that my fate is in your keeping, and do
 “not trust it to another, I beseech you.”—
 “As far as it depends on me,” she re-
 plied, still deeply blushing, “it shall be a
 “happy one; but there are duties which
 “I dare not violate, let the sacrifice
 “they demand be ever so painful. If
 “you have not prepared yourself for the

" condition I must ever annex to the disposal
 " of my regards, I am sincerely sorry you
 " did not make choice of a more indepen-
 " dent friend than myself."—"Should the
 " condition be severely exacted," return-
 ed he, " yet I can never repent the
 " choice I have made, nor will I ever cease
 " to respect the duties you hold sacred."

CHAPTER XLIX.

LORD Osmond's letter, and the invitation he had authorized his friend to give the party, at Barnly Manor, was put by Mr. Evelyne into handsomer terms, than originally it was expressed in, and, for various reasons, it was accepted by all; and on the appointed day, the whole cavalcade moved towards Osmond Castle: Madame de Villeneuve accompanied Lady Osmond in her chaise; Lady Julia, Miss Montague, and Mr. Evelyne, occupied the Marquis's coach, while he, himself, went in Lord Walton's, and the Marchioness chose to set out in her phaeton, with Monsieur de Sangvere, as her charioteer. Young de Villeneuve, to his mother's infinite surprize and vexation, not being yet arrived, a note was left for

him, in which he was instructed to follow.

They reached Osmond Castle after a pleasant journey, in health and safety, but not entirely without apprehension that past events would be unhappily recurred to in the course of their visit. Lord Osmond received his mother with a frigid air of respect, bordering on the stateliness of offended pride; the rest, save Madame de Villeneuf, and Monsieur de Sangvere, he embraced with his wonted affection and warmth of heart. For the first week, he had his house crowded with company, in the hurry of which, he appeared solicitous to lose himself, and his reflections, if possible; he, however, carefully avoided all conversation whatever with Lady Osmond, after he had led her to the top of his table; and, if by chance they were left alone for an instant, he would start, and without framing any excuse, walk hastily out of the room. He took this opportunity of entertaining all his neighbours

hours and tenants, who flocked to the Castle, eager to pay their duty to their young Lord, on his coming to reside amongst them; and he seemed particularly desirous that no civilities should be omitted to these guests; and all, except Lady Osmond, were delighted with the honest testimonies of joy exhibited on the occasion; for her part, she thought it barbarous, rude, and fatiguing, and wondered how her daughters and the other ladies had patience to endure it. Lord Osmond, however, disregarded her evident dislike to the festivity he encouraged, though in reality he could as little partake it as her Ladyship: he made a point of being liberal and magnificent, elegant and attentive to every one, while, under the mask of pleasure, he carried a bleeding heart in his bosom, and often retired to hide his emotions, when he could no longer restrain them. The bustle continually kept up at Osmond Castle, was propitious to the still increasing attach-

ment between Lady Julia and Mr. Evelyne; they could enjoy one another's converse unobscured, amidst the general confusion of company and amusements, and in riding, walking, and dancing, they were almost inseparable. The Marchioness, too, seized this opportunity of gratifying the unhappy partiality she had conceived for Monsieur de Sangvere: she had, as yet, overstepped the bounds of delicacy and propriety only; she had not plunged herself into that deep gulf of shame and misery, from which there is no relief in this world; but dangerous is it to break down the fences of modesty and decorum; guilt treads fast upon the heels of the folly and levity which first prompts woman to her ruin.

As the round of dissipation gradually returned to the point of calm, from whence it began to move, each party became more circumspect in their conduct, till at length the Marquis and Lord Osmond agreed upon disclosing Mr. Evelyne's attachment

tachment to Lady Julia, and her sentiments towards him, thinking it time to make an end of all concealment, and render two amiable people happy in each other, if possible : for this purpose, Lord Osmond, however adverse to any conference with his mother, resolved to join the Marquis in demanding her consent to the desired union. Accordingly, then, one morning, when all the party, Madame de Villeneuve and her Ladyship only excepted, were gone different ways, the two noblemen returned together to the apartment where the ladies were sitting at work ; after some trifling conversation had passed, Lord Osmond, impatient to come to the point, fixed, with penetrating steadiness, his dark eyes on his mother's face, she scarcely enduring the examination. He then, with his person erect, from the idea of an opposition he had sternly prepared himself to encounter, thus addressed her : “ I don't know that it is necessary
“ to inform your Ladyship on the subject

“ I am about to propose for your confide-
 “ ration, but granting it should, I think
 “ there is no cause for hesitation, when I
 “ point out to you an attachment be-
 “ tween two, deservedly dear to me as
 “ the ties of blood and friendship can
 “ make them; I mean Julia, my sister,
 “ and Evelyne, my friend.”—Lady Of-
 mond here affected a look of astonishment,
 and replied—“ This information, I as-
 “ sure your Lordship, is perfectly new to
 “ me;”—and the tone in which she spoke,
 intimated that it was by no means plea-
 sant to her. “ I should scarcely have
 “ supposed,” returned he, “ that it could
 “ have escaped your observation, Ma-
 “ dam; but since you say it has, you
 “ must permit me to assure you of the
 “ truth of what I assert.”—“ And me,”
 said the Marquis, “ to join in soliciting
 “ your approbation of their union.”—
 “ Your Lordships are very hasty, indeed,”
 cried she, with a sneer, “ you do not al-
 “ low me time to breathe between the in-
 “ stant

“stant of communication and that of de-
 “termination; but you must permit me
 “also to inform you, that the subject in
 “question is of too serious a nature to be
 “lightly decided upon;—when your
 “Lordship’s father,” added she, address-
 “ing her son, “committed the sole care
 “and direction of his daughters to me,
 “I resolved to make it my study to me-
 “rit the important trust, and prove my-
 “self a faithful guardian as well as a fond
 “mother; have I hitherto acquitted my-
 “self well or ill? Has your eldest sister
 “been, under my guidance, fortunate or
 “otherwise?”—“Fortunate, Madam, be-
 “yond measure;” replied he,—the Mar-
 quis bowed gracefully and gratefully.—
 “Your younger sister, then,” she resumed,
 “will, I trust, be equally happy under
 “the influence of the same maternal care
 “and sollicitude.”—“I hope she will,”
 cried he, with energy, “though less dis-
 “tinguished in rank; the man, who as-
 “pires to her favour, is, I dare pronounce,
 “pos-

“ possessed of those more valuable quali-
 “ ties which secure Clara’s felicity, far
 “ more than titles or fortune.”—“ I do
 “ not dispute the merits or virtues of
 “ your friend, my Lord,” said she, “ but
 “ I am sorry he has fixed his affections on
 “ a woman already destined for another.
 “ Your sister, I hope, has not been so in-
 “ considerate to dispose of her’s without
 “ consulting me.”—“ Pardon me, Ma-
 “ dam,” replied Lord Osmond, “ if I ob-
 “ ject to your disposal of Julia’s hand
 “ without consulting her, as much as you
 “ can do to that of her heart on the same
 “ terms. I told you, I believe, or I
 “ meant to tell you, that she had bestow-
 “ ed her affections on Evelyne; what
 “ violence, what unjust and unnatural vio-
 “ lence, then, would you do to her heart,
 “ by giving her to any other man, suppo-
 “ sing she had the weakness to comply
 “ with your commands in this instance!
 “ be assured I will never quietly submit
 “ to it; my friend, he, too, will oppose it;
 “ and

“ and the contemptible animal who shall
 “ dare attempt to seize the hand of my
 “ sister by force, must arm himself against
 “ my life in defence of his own, if he has
 “ the spirit to defend it. I own that
 “ threatening a woman is wrong, but I
 “ cannot always command my pas-
 “ sions.”—“ Very true, my Lord,” said
 she, with a sarcastic smile, “ you cannot ;
 “ but if you allow yourself leisure to re-
 “ collect how little they are likely to work
 “ in me the desired effect, you might,
 “ perhaps, be induced to plead your sis-
 “ ter’s, or rather your friend’s cause more
 “ calmly, though I will not deceive you :
 “ I am resolved ; Julia is the promised
 “ wife of another, nor could any argu-
 “ ment, however violent or peaceable, al-
 “ ter that resolution ; and I must add,
 “ that I have no doubt but that the gen-
 “ tleman, whose pretensions I have au-
 “ thorized, will maintain them in any way
 “ you or Mr. Evelyn may think proper
 “ to demand.”—“ Good God !” ex-
 claimed

claimed he, "is it possible that you can
 "so coolly condemn your daughter to
 "misery? Is it not sufficient that I am
 "the victim of your cruelty? Must Ju-
 "lia, also, be made unhappy for life?
 "Consider, Madam, whether you are
 "prepared for the catastrophe which may,
 "nay, which will be the conclusion; Can
 "you support the calamities with firmness,
 "you have been so determined in drawing
 "down on your family? What will be
 "your feelings when the vain lustre you
 "are labouring to secure to your house, is
 "clouded for ever by the death of those
 "who should reflect it?"—"Do, my
 "dear Lady Osmond," continued the
 Marquis, resuming the discourse where
 Lord Osmond, struggling with emotions,
 abruptly dropped it; "do reflect on the
 "many evils you are unwarily bringing
 "on us all, and let us, ere it is too late,
 "owe to you our supreme felicity."—
 "I grieve, my Lords," returned she, "to
 "appear to you as one determined on the
 "de-

“destruction of a family, I am solicitous
 “to preserve; if I do not adopt your
 “ideas on this subject, you must forgive
 “me; I act according to what I believe
 “right, nor can I deviate, though I in-
 “cur your heaviest displeasure.”—She
 then rose and left the room as the most
 effectual method of putting an end to the
 debate; Madame de Villeneuve, inwardly
 incensed, hastily followed her. “How
 “obdurate! How unfeeling!” cried
 Lord Osmond, “What is now to be
 “done?”—“To support Julia,” replied
 the Marquis, “against a power that
 “would overwhelm her; who can this
 “destined husband be? Has Madame de
 “Villeneuve a son at liberty?”—“Yes;”
 returned he, “and did not you remark,
 “some time ago, at Barnly Manor, they
 “talked of his being expected in Eng-
 “land?”—“No,” replied the Marquis;
 “not knowing him, I paid no attention
 “to this information; but I’ll lay my life
 “he is the man they mean, yet Julia
 “knows

“ knows nothing of it.” — “ Not the least,
 “ I will answer for her, but she must be
 “ cautioned against him, if he should
 “ come ; to this house he shall, however,
 “ have no welcome, and so I will acquaint
 “ Lady Osmond, for my blood would
 “ boil at the sight of him, and I could
 “ not answer for myself that I should
 “ keep my temper, even though I should
 “ break the laws of hospitality in doing
 “ otherwise.” — The result of the late con-
 versation the Marquis then undertook to
 convey, as gently as possible, to Lady
 Julia, while Lord Osmond retired to
 compose himself, ere he met his guests at
 dinner ; at which, when the party assem-
 bled, every one wore an air of constraint ;
 very little was eat, and less was said du-
 ring this repast, and after it the ladies
 soon retired. Lady Julia looked pale and
 dejected ; Miss Montague’s attention was
 rivetted to her, and, in short, every per-
 son present seemed to sympathize in her
 distress, even those that caused it ; yet the
 subject

subject was never touched upon, till they were joined by the gentlemen, and the servants were withdrawn after tea. Lord Walton then seated himself by Lady Ofmond, saying: "Your Ladyship must
 "pardon me if I presume to take the liberty of joining in the general petition
 "in behalf of two young people, whose
 "happiness hangs on your word; give
 "me leave to convey to you, Lady Ofmond, the united entreaties and wishes
 "of all your family and friends on a subject so near all our hearts, and in which
 "the peace of much the larger part of
 "all present is materially concerned."—
 Interrupting him here, she replied:
 "Your Lordship must excuse me, if I
 "observe, that after what passed this
 "morning, all farther conversation on this
 "same subject is unnecessary; my determinations were not lightly formed, nor
 "do I believe they will be lightly given
 "up; Lady Julia's happiness is as dear
 "to me as it can possibly be to any other
 "per-

“ person, and I am persuaded I rather
 “ promote than retard it by refusing, po-
 “ sitively refusing, my consent to her union
 “ with Mr. Evelyne, who, though, no
 “ doubt, amiable as his friends paint him,
 “ yet differs so widely in one essential ar-
 “ ticle, that it must ever prevent his mar-
 “ riage with my daughter.”—“ As
 “ Lady Osmond waved that objection in
 “ her own marriage,” returned Lord
 Walton, “ I thought, in consideration of
 “ her daughter’s attachment to Mr. Eve-
 “ lyne, she might have overlooked it
 “ once more.”—“ I have, and still too
 “ severely feel the misery,” replied she,
 “ of loving one, of whose eternal welfare I
 “ must ever be doubtful, to suffer my daugh-
 “ ter to fall into the same error.”—I am
 “ heartily sorry for it,” said Lord Walton,
 gravely; “ but here,” he added, “ comes
 “ Evelyne himself; love may give him
 “ eloquence to plead his own and Lady
 “ Julia’s cause more successfully, I shall,
 “ therefore, resign my place to him.”—
 Mr.

Mr. Evelyne now approached Lady Osmond, who wearied, but not moved by all these expostulations and entreaties, found it difficult to preserve her politeness in refusal, but impossible to escape from solicitation; she, therefore, armed herself afresh to listen to the advocate who was next to assail her, and who undoubtedly would urge his suit with more energy, because more interested in its success than the rest. "I come," said Mr. Evelyne, "though almost hopeless of obtaining your Ladyship's favourable attention; yet I come to petition in behalf, not only of myself, for singly I could not expect your clemency, but united in the same cause with Lady Julia, what difficulties shall deter me? What is there which I will not attempt to render myself worthy of her, and of your approbation? I am at liberty to assure you, Lady Osmond, that your lovely daughter's happiness is in question, mine is in your keeping also; say, then,

“ Madam, can you condemn us both to
 “ the sad necessity of deploring, all our
 “ lives, the total loss of that felicity which
 “ it is so much in your power to bestow,
 “ without injury, I trust, to the object of
 “ our mutual solicitude? I offer not my-
 “ self to you as deserving Lady Julia,
 “ but having the good fortune to render
 “ myself not despicable in her estimation,
 “ I venture, with all deference to her ex-
 “ alted virtues, thus to present myself a
 “ candidate for your consent. My family,
 “ permit me to say, will not disgrace her,
 “ though the nobility of her own, added
 “ to her other many excellencies, might
 “ entitle her to the first alliance in this or
 “ any other country; my fortune, though
 “ inferior to her merits and your Lady-
 “ ship’s just expectations for her, is yet
 “ more than sufficient to secure to her all
 “ the elegancies of life to which she has
 “ ever been accustomed, and to which
 “ she has so fair a claim; she condescends
 “ to think, that these things, combining
 “ with

“ with my most passionate admiration,
 “ my most lively esteem, respect, and
 “ love, are not beneath her acceptance,
 “ and having blessed me with a know-
 “ ledge of her good opinion, she only
 “ waits till her choice is confirmed by
 “ you, to still farther bless me with her-
 “ self.” — “ Spare me, Sir,” cried Lady
 Osmond, “ spare both yourself and me,
 “ I conjure you ; name this distressing
 “ subject no more, nor put me to the pain
 “ of repeating that determination which I
 “ have formed on the purest principles.
 “ You will start if I propose to you the
 “ renunciation of your religion, and yet
 “ that is the only condition on which I
 “ could ever consent to your union with
 “ my daughter, provided she was not al-
 “ ready disposed of; but that being really
 “ and truly the case, why should we ar-
 “ gue the point any farther? I am
 “ very sorry your peace is interrupted,
 “ yet, believe me, Sir, there is little rea-
 “ son to fear your overcoming this disap-
 “ pointment ;

“pointment; at your age there are a
 “thousand ways of dissipating chagrin,
 “and I have only to hope you may quick-
 “ly discover and profit by them.”—
 “Your Ladyship ought better to know
 “the power your sex maintain over the
 “mind of man,” returned he; “our au-
 “thority to assert this, is ancient and of
 “holy writ; truth only can boast a more
 “lasting and prevailing influence, and
 “when truth is united to all that is lovely
 “and excellent in woman, what can de-
 “stroy the impression they jointly make
 “upon the heart? Nothing, be assured;
 “the characters engraven there by two
 “such irresistible powers, are for ever in-
 “delible, the hand of death only can
 “erase them. You tell me Lady Julia
 “is already disposed of; can your Lady-
 “ship, then, without remorse, condemn
 “the fairest and best of the great Creator’s
 “works, your own child, too, to the mi-
 “serable fate of marrying a man, how-
 “ever deserving of her, yet not possessed
 “ of

“ of her affections? And give me leave
 “ to ask, who is he that would accept even
 “ Lady Julia without a heart? If such a
 “ man exists, his being capable of grati-
 “ fying his own senseless and indelicate
 “ passion, at the expence of the happiness
 “ of her he loves, proves him a wretch
 “ unworthy to live in the sunshine of her
 “ presence; here my adored Lady Ju-
 “ lia’s peace is wholly concerned, for not
 “ even to obtain her, could I consent to
 “ sacrifice my faith; no, Madam, how-
 “ ever lightly and inconsiderately I may
 “ hitherto have treated the most impor-
 “ tant of all duties, I have too sincere a re-
 “ verence for the religion in which I have
 “ been educated, to put it in competition
 “ with any worldly happiness, even the
 “ supreme happiness of being united to
 “ your angelic daughter. I call not, how-
 “ ever, in question the saving qualities of
 “ your faith; on the contrary, I am per-
 “ suaded that if mortal ever merited the
 “ joys of heaven, it is Lady Julia, and
 VOL. III. K “ she,

“ she, I doubt not, will possess them, for
 “ her soul is fitted for the reception of all
 “ holy and refined pleasures; therefore,
 “ though I cannot embrace her religion, I
 “ will faithfully guard the possession to
 “ her, of liberty to adore her Creator ac-
 “ cording to her conscience; I will not
 “ ask her to think as I do; I give you
 “ my honour she shall never be required
 “ or persuaded to alter a tittle of her
 “ mode of religious worship; I will try
 “ to emulate her zeal in the practice of
 “ my own, but I will never retard her pro-
 “ gress to heaven, by unavailing argument
 “ or destructive controversy.”—Lord Os-
 mond, who had listened to part of this
 conversation, at length exclaimed, “ Eve-
 “ lyne, ’tis in vain! Do you not see that
 “ compassion and feeling for the happi-
 “ ness or misery of others, make no part
 “ of Lady Osmond’s character? She is
 “ superior to all such trifling considera-
 “ tions.”—“ Oh, my brother!” cried
 Lady Julia, who heard him speak thus,
 “ Do

“ Do not, I conjure you do not, make
 “ me the fatal cause of disagreement be-
 “ tween our mother and you.” — “ No,
 “ Osmond,” said Miss Montague, “ do
 “ not utter in the warmth of resentment
 “ what in your cooler moments you may
 “ regret ; Lady Osmond, I must believe,
 “ will not persist in making Julia unhap-
 “ py, when she has had time to reflect on
 “ the consequences.” — “ Had Miss
 “ Montague been kind enough to have
 “ guarded her inconsiderate friend from
 “ the error into which she has fallen, I
 “ should have been more obliged to her,
 “ than I am for answering for me now,”
 said Lady Osmond. — “ Henrietta,” re-
 plied Julia, “ is free from all blame, for
 “ unaided by her counsel, and uninflu-
 “ enced by her advice, I have plunged
 “ myself into this endless labyrinth of
 “ disquietude ; and did I not owe much
 “ to Mr. Evelyn’s generous attachment,
 “ I would not make another effort to ob-
 “ tain happiness, since my mother does not

“deem me worthy of it.”—“Julia,” said
 Lady Osmond, “when have I neglected
 “to promote your happiness? But would
 “you have me forfeit my word, and con-
 “sent to your union with an heretic? An
 “union which would endanger, if not de-
 “stroy you, for ever; no, if you expect
 “my blessing, or the blessing of Heaven,
 “give up all thoughts of it, and prepare
 “to leave this place with me immediately,
 “to-morrow, for longer to remain here
 “would be madness.”—“To-morrow!”
 exclaimed Lady Julia, “Oh, Heavens!
 “help me some kind friend to sustain
 “this blow, I was not armed against it;
 “but I obey,” added she, recovering her-
 self, “I cannot without a crime do other-
 “wise, and, therefore, I obey; yet ere I
 “go, perhaps for ever, Evelyne, hear me
 “call the Holy Saints to witness, that
 “since my duty forbids me to be happy
 “in your affection, I will never suffer
 “myself to form a less exalted or less pure
 “attachment; remember me, then, as a
 “friend

“ friend whom fate destined to another
 “ country ; but let us hope we shall meet
 “ at last.”—“ Lady Julia,” cried he,
 “ Oh do not thus cruelly combine against
 “ me ! I cannot, will not part with you,
 “ to part with life were less, far less pain-
 “ ful ; stay, then, and bless me.”—
 “ Would I could, my friend,” replied she,
 faintly—“ Oh, talk to her no longer,” said
 Miss Montague, “ see, she grows incapa-
 “ ble of hearing you.”—Lord Osmond
 now supported her in his arm, and she had
 just power left to utter, “ Convey me to
 “ my room, dear Osmond ;”—he did so,
 and there left her to pour out her griefs
 on the bosom of her friend, Miss Monta-
 gue, who remained with her during the
 night ; Lady Osmond also retired with
 the constant Madame de Villeneuve, who
 embraced her when they were alone, and
 lavished the most profuse expressions of
 praise and gratitude on her for the victory
 she had obtained. “ If we can really go
 “ to-morrow, all will be well ;” added

she.—“ Never doubt it,” replied her Ladyship, “ and now let your son, if ever
 “ he is found again, allow me the honour
 “ due to a consummate general; I have
 “ stood a regular siege, I think, and deserve
 “ a crown of laurel.”—“ My son, if on
 “ the face of the earth, shall present it;”
 returned Madame de Villeneuve, smiling.—

The next morning, in obedience to the orders Lady Osmond had given her servants, the carriages were ready to convey her and her friend, with Lady Julia, to London; the party met at breakfast with red eyes and melancholy countenances; Lady Julia and Mr. Evelyne sat like the statues of dumb despair, neither had power to utter the feelings which rendered both wretched: for some minutes they were all silent; at length Lord Osmond cried, “ This is too much!”—“ Can
 “ Lady Osmond really be serious?”
 added the Marquis.—The Marchioness, unused to command her sensations, burst into tears; Lady Julia, no longer able to
 com-

combat hers, wept in Miss Montague's arms; then resuming a momentary calmness, she turned to her brother and said: "Dear Henry, let our mutual friend find comfort in you, I have none to bestow, save this, that I will never marry if my fate divides me for ever from him."—

The carriage being now ready, Lady Osmond rose, paid her parting compliments to all present, and impatient to be gone, moved towards the door. Mr. Evelyne stood with his eyes fixed on Lady Julia, whose hand he now held between his, but he could not trust himself to speak a single sentence, while she again suffered her tears to flow in torrents; this silence was more eloquent than language, both felt and understood it; Lady Osmond observing it, said, "Come, Julia, we wait for you."—She, then, forced herself away, embraced her sister and Miss Montague, and took an affectionate leave of all; Lord Osmond led her to the carriage, Mr. Evelyne could not: "Friends as we

“are in misfortunes, Julia,” said he,
 “we feel a peculiar tenderness for each
 “other, may we soon be united in hap-
 “pier bonds!”——

CHAPTER L.

WHILE the inhabitants of Osmond Castle were thus agitated, Edel-frida was quietly brooding over her griefs at Rushworth Abbey ; her journey thither had been performed with great attention on the part of Mr. Medway, to the ease and safety of his fellow-travellers, who found him kind to their weaknesses, and indulgent to their melancholy, though he appeared himself superior to the events of this life ; whatever form they presented themselves to him in, to all trials this world could make upon the firmness and constancy of his soul, it was immovably serene, not from a want of sensibility, but because he had fixed his hopes above, and would not be interrupted by vanities below ; yet his piety and benevolence made him anxiously seek to point

out the way to heaven to his fellow mortals. The first day's journey was passed, by both Edelfrida and Mrs. Villers, in almost total silence, and this silence was only broken on the part of Mr. Medway, by some general observations and reflections. At night, however, it happened that the two ladies were obliged to occupy one apartment, by which means they insensibly lost the reserve they set out with, and became greatly pleased with each other; their intimacy increased as they proceeded, and by the time they arrived at the place of their destination, a secret sympathy had attached them. On the fourth day they came in sight of Rushworth Abbey, an ancient structure, in a solitary situation. When the chaise entered the long avenue leading in a straight line to the great gates, which shut in a walled court immediately round the house, Edelfrida involuntarily shuddered; Mrs. Villers heaved a deep sigh, and seemed greatly agitated. "Compose
 " your-

“yourself, my dear,” said Mr. Medway
 to his sister, “you are about to enter the
 “abode of tranquillity, and to embrace
 “an affectionate friend; fully not, there-
 “fore, the present hour with the tears of
 “sorrow, rather humbly rejoice that you
 “are permitted to repose yourself, at last,
 “in this peaceful retreat. amidst your
 “most faithful friends:”—Mrs. Villers
 again sighed, but spoke not—“and you,
 “Miss Dudley,” continued he, addressing
 himself to Edelfrida, “do you also cease
 “to indulge unreasonable grief; the
 “mistress of this mansion would pity, in-
 “deed, but she would also condemn an
 “immoderate excess of affliction, for
 “any thing which can befall us here.”—
 “If Lady Rushworth,” replied Edelfrida,
 “is of so superior an order of beings, as
 “to look with contempt on all sublunary
 “bliss; if she can calmly look down upon
 “pleasure and pain with equal indiffe-
 “rence and composure, how I shall dare
 “to appear before her, I know not; for

“ I am covered with a consciousness of
 “ error, yet can I not withdraw my heart
 “ and its affections from the objects
 “ which have engaged them here.”—
 “ You have made no effort,” returned
 Mr. Medway; “ on the contrary, you
 “ have encouraged yourself to bewail with
 “ bitterness of sorrow, what you ought to
 “ have submitted yourself to with pati-
 “ ence and humility.”—“ How difficult
 “ is it,” cried Edelfrida, “ to practise
 “ that stoicism which you preach, Sir,
 “ while every powerful emotion of the
 “ soul rises in opposition to it!”—“ Those
 “ powerful emotions of the soul,” he an-
 swered, “ should be subdued by reflec-
 “ tion on the higher enjoyments offered to
 “ our faith, and constancy in virtue, here-
 “ after.”—The carriage now stopped,
 and Mr. Medway alighted; he then assis-
 ted the ladies out, and they all three as-
 cended the steps leading to the hall door
 together, Mrs. Villers leaning on Edelfri-
 da’s arm; then followed her brother
 through

through this spacious room, and at the door of the common setting-room, they were met by Lady Rushworth, whose dress proclaimed her in the first year of her widowhood. "You are welcome back, my dear brother;" said her Ladyship to Mr. Medway, with the most uniform serenity of features, "Where is my sister?"—"Here, here she is!" exclaimed Mrs. Villers, trembling with agitation, and she pressed forward as she spoke into Lady Rushworth's arms, which were extended to receive her; but still the unruffled calmness of her countenance remained, as she embraced this unfortunate and long absent sister, and then conducted her into the room.—Edelfrida watched this scene with no very favourable idea of Lady Rushworth's tenderness or affection; her own eyes were suffused with tears; her own bosom heaved with repeated sighs; but neither sigh nor tear could she discover in that lady. Mr. Medway, now taking Edelfrida by the hand,

hand, presented her to the mistress of the
 house as his ward: "I promised," added
 he, "that you would receive this young
 lady into your family with kindness;
 and since it falls to my lot to be
 her protector, and to superintend her
 conduct, for a time, at least, it falls to
 your's, Lady Rushworth, to render her
 abode amongst us, such as may not in-
 duce her to repent the authority I have
 been invested with by her consent."—
 "I shall be happy," replied her Ladyship,
 "to fulfil any promise you have made to
 the best of my power; Miss Dudley
 will, I hope, find Rushworth Abbey a
 safe and tranquil asylum, and its inha-
 bitants pleased to contribute to her sa-
 tisfaction; gaiety we cannot offer her,
 for we are far removed from it, both
 in situation and wishes."—"It is not
 in scenes of gaiety," replied Mr. Med-
 way, "that the mind acquires fortitude
 and resignation. Those mental pains,
 which great sensibility in early youth
 is

“ is apt to render excruciating, may, for
 “ a moment, be hushed in the tumult of
 “ dissipation; but the first irksome hour
 “ of retirement, which the dissipated are
 “ condemned to, will revive, with fresh
 “ vigour, all the torments of real and
 “ imaginary grief, and open anew all the
 “ wounds a too susceptible heart may have
 “ received; but here my fair ward, I hope,”
 added he, “ will experience a more per-
 “ fect and lasting solace to her uneasiness;
 “ for though she will never find us gay, I
 “ trust she will always find us free from
 “ the gloom of despondency.”—“ I hope
 “ so;” said Lady Rushworth, with the
 same placid look, which neither joy nor
 sorrow had power to change.---The tra-
 vellers were now entreated to take some
 refreshment, and though two of them
 were little inclined to do so, yet they all
 sat down with Mr. Medway for that pur-
 pose. Soon after, Lady Rushworth in-
 troduced her children, at the sight of
 whom, Mrs. Villers was roused from the
 deeper

deeper dejection she appeared to have fallen into since her entrance in Rushworth Abbey ; she wept over them as she tenderly embraced them, and even suffered the most violent emotion, which their mother observing, she hurried them out of the room again ; but the sensations they had awakened in the mind of Mrs. Villers, did not so easily subside as her Ladyship seemed to expect ; they even increased to such a degree, that it was thought proper to remove her into the apartment prepared for her. Edelfrida, who felt everybody's sorrows with as much vivacity, if not with so deep an impression as her own, could not now behold this unhappy young woman without joining " tears to her tears." She offered to accompany her to her room, and the offer was gratefully accepted ; then leaning on her, Mrs. Villers, slowly and with trembling steps, retired. Lady Rushworth, never deficient in any act of civility, and coldly proper on all occasions, attended them,

them, leading the way to the apartment,
 which her sister was to occupy ; out of it
 a door opened into another, which her
 Ladyship “ hoped Miss Dudley would
 “ find commodious.” She then left
 them, having offered to send her maid
 with hartshorn and water, or any thing
 else of the kind Mrs. Villers might
 wish to take ; this offer being declined,
 she returned to her brother, impatient, no
 doubt, to be better informed of Edelfri-
 da’s history, of which Mr. Medway had
 only given her an imperfect sketch by
 letter. “ My gentle, and too feeling Miss
 “ Dudley,” said Mrs. Villers, in an ac-
 cent of such melting grief and softness, as
 penetrated Edelfrida’s heart, “ why
 “ cannot you copy the example of those
 “ who behold all things unmoved ? Why
 “ add to your own painfully keen sensa-
 “ tions, so soft a sympathy for woes, the
 “ source of which you know not, the vic-
 “ tim of which you have only known so
 “ lately ? Soothing as this generous com-
 “ passion

"passion is to me I would forego it, to see
 "you happier, though the tears you shed
 "in pity to my agonies, fall like balm up-
 "on my wounded, my broken heart;
 "yet, my sweet friend, repress them for
 "your own sake; chase from your bosom
 "that enemy to repose, and court the
 "friendly indifference, which feels not
 "even for itself."—"I must cease to
 "exist," replied Edelfrida, "ere I cease to
 "feel, I believe: but grieve not, my
 "dear Mrs. Villers, on my account, that
 "I cannot behold you unhappy with in-
 "difference; those who can, may be ex-
 "empt from misery, but they must also
 "be incapable of enjoyment, and there-
 "fore to me can never be objects of
 "envy." Mrs. Villers pressed her hand in
 silence, but it was a silence Edelfrida felt
 as forcibly as if she had poured forth a tor-
 rent of thanks.

When the hour of breakfast arrived the
 next morning, Lady Rushworth, "con-
 "stant as the dial to the sun," entered
 the

the breakfast-room, where Edelfrida had met Mr. Medway the moment before; her Ladyship first inquired after Miss Dudley's health, then asked for her sister. "I just spoke to Mrs. Villers," replied Edelfrida, "but found her too much indisposed to either talk or rise from her bed."—"Shall we send for advice?" demanded Lady Rushworth, of her brother, but without the least tremour of alarm, or the least symptom of concern.—"I will go to her myself," returned he, sighing, yet endeavouring to suppress the sigh, "perhaps it may be full as much in my power to administer relief to her as a physician; for where the malady lies in the heart, medicine has little chance of reaching the cause."—"Do," replied Lady Rushworth, "and bring me word if I could have any thing got for her that she can take."—She then quietly set about making the breakfast. Meanwhile, Edelfrida, with her wonted promptitude and impetuosity, conceived a fixed dislike for

for the woman who was held up to her as the pattern of perfection which she ought to imitate.

Mr. Medway returned ere many words had passed between the two ladies.—“How did you find Mrs. Villers, Sir?” said Edelfrida, anxiously, and with that anxiety painted on her countenance.—“I hope she is only fatigued, not so very ill,” added Lady Rushworth, without seeming to care which was the case.—“She is both fatigued and ill,” replied he, “and I am going to send for Doctor Pierſon immediately; her eyes are unusually heavy, and her hands are hot, he may allay this fever; but to a higher Power,” continued he, “we muſt appeal, humbly appeal, for the remedy which is to calm the perturbation within.” He then ſat down to another table, and wrote a few lines, which he diſpatched a ſervant with to Doctor Pierſon, the phyſician who attended the family; after which, he re-ſeated himſelf at the breakfast table.

“Lady

“Lady Rushworth,” resumed he, as he took his tea out of her hand, “I fear I have brought sickness and death into your house, the final close of human calamities; I wish it had been otherwise, for I cannot desire to interrupt the peaceful serenity of your life: I trust you want not these remembrancers of your mortality; to less regulated minds,” and he glanced a look on Edelfrida, “the melancholy memento may not be unwholesome.”—“But you do not apprehend,” said her Ladyship, calmly, “that there is any immediate danger, I hope?”—“I do apprehend,” replied he, “that a very short time, indeed, will now serve to lay the fragile frame of our poor sufferer in the silent grave—a few days may! a few weeks, I believe, certainly will close the scene of this life on her for ever, and a blessed transition, no doubt, it will be! I fervently pray Heaven it may,” he added, raising his eyes in humble supplication.

“We

—“ We must submit,” said Lady Rushworth, in a firm tone of voice. Edelfrida’s tears flowed fast; she put down her cup and saucer, and covered her face with her handkerchief.—“ Be comforted,” cried Mr. Medway, tenderly laying his hand on her arm: “ Lady Rushworth “ has wisely observed, we must submit; “ but you, I find, have much self command to learn and practise, ere you arrive at this happy and humble resignation.” His words conveyed reproof, but his voice and his manner bespoke at once his sympathy and his compassion. “ It is my province,” continued he, “ to “ preach, your’s to attend: it is my duty “ to practise the virtues I recommend, “ your’s to profit by the example, if, as I “ hope it is not a bad one; calm then the “ anguish of your soul, my young friend, “ and rather teach yourself to rejoice that “ the object of our mutual concern has “ nearly performed her appointed pilgrimage; for it has been a weary one,

I

“ Heaven

“ Heaven knows, and the patience with
 “ which she has hitherto borne it, will, I
 “ trust, appear sufficient to atone for all
 “ her failings, for failings she has many,
 “ without doubt.” Edelfrida could not
 reply, so much was she affected; Lady
 Rushworth looked grave, but her gravity
 proceeded rather from her thinking the
 nice and rigid laws of decorum and propriety
 were infringed, by the sorrow Edelfrida
 took no pains to conceal within the
 bounds her Ladyship’s temper and fortitude
 prescribed to herself, than from any
 reflection on the state of a sister who might
 be snatched from her in a moment, and
 whose misfortunes would almost have excused
 the tears of tenderness and affliction, had they
 sullied the cheeks of patience and fortitude
 themselves: virtues which rank next to those
 in the Christian calendar; of faith, which exalts
 us to Heaven; hope, which sustains us under
 all temporal evils; and charity, which
 covers

covers that multitude of sins which would otherwise overwhelm us.

As soon as she could, Edelfrida left Lady Rushworth, and went to Mrs. Villers's apartment, on whose death-like complexion she read a confirmation of Mr. Medway's prediction, that a short time would convert the sufferings of the woman, into the blissful purity of the faint: she approached the bed with a heart beating time to the rapid and unequal pulse of her whom she expected, ere long, to behold a corpse. Mrs. Villers held out a burning hand to her, in token of welcome; even her languid eye spoke for a single moment what her parched tongue refused to utter—the grateful tenderness of a bosom, overburdened with its own painful sensations. Edelfrida pressed the hand between her's, and let fall on it a tear, which was not lost, a mental ejaculation sprung from the heart where it was felt, that the great Disposer of human events

events would reward the compassion, which melted thus gently over its sufferings.

When the physician came, which he did, as soon as the distance he lived from Rushworth Abbey would permit, he entered the apartment of the invalid, he felt her pulse, and went through all the ceremony of his profession; he wrote a prescription, and consented to stay till the medicines were taken, and had time to take the effect he expected; he assured Mr. Medway, that his patient was in no danger from the fever, but he apprehended a rapid decline would succeed it. Mr. Medway was prepared for such tidings; "but though he bore them like a Christian, he felt them like a man." Edelfrida continued to sit by the bed-side, nor would she suffer any other person to administer to Mrs. Villers those things which she was ordered to take; this attention was not thrown away, though in words it was not acknowledged, yet the

grateful heart of the receiver was feelingly alive to every fresh token of kindness and humanity, which, perhaps, the mortification inflicted by a sister's coldness might heighten, even beyond their real value. During this time, Lady Rushworth omitted no care of providing properly for the sick; every thing which one in Mrs. Villers's situation might be supposed to want, was sedulously brought into her room, and the attendants received the strictest orders to be watchful, quiet, and obedient to the physician's commands: her Ladyship came frequently herself too, to inquire after her sister; but as her children were placed at the other side of the house, to prevent their disturbing Mrs. Villers, or their witnessing a scene which might have roused the latent feeling of their hearts, she was, according to her usual custom, employed with them most part of each succeeding day; for it was contrary to her system to let them see that it was in the power of any thing to derange

the settled habit of her mind : even at the death of their father, she set them no example to grieve, bearing it herself with the firmest temper of philosophy ; and while she led them piously to pray for his release from that purgatorial state to which the Church of Rome consigns her members after death, till the gates of Heaven are opened by the humble supplications of those who remain on earth, she maintained the most rigid command over her feelings, that they should not betray a weakness her children might copy.

Far, however, was Edelfrida from being converted to this frigid state of what she deemed constitutional apathy ; on the contrary, she watched by the bed-side of her poor suffering friend with unwearied solicitude and unceasing sorrow, taking only just as much repose, as exhausted nature would not be denied, for above a week, during which Mrs. Villers continued extremely ill.

CHAPTER LI.

DURING this week of constant confinement in a sick room, Edelfrida had little leisure to think of her own sorrows, much less of her health or comfort ; she snatched hastily the necessary food to sustain her existence, and when worn out with fatigue, she just closed her eyes in sleep long enough to allow her strength and spirits to return to her compassionate employment.

Osmond, the tender and passionate Osmond, was for a while banished from her mind, which, with ardour, pursued the task before her, of sustaining the drooping head of the patient sufferer : towards the end of the week, Mrs. Villers began once more to shew some signs of a renovated existence, yet still she was feeble and

languid

languid to the greatest degree of weakness; ere she could gain strength to frame a sentence, while supported by pillows she sat up in bed, with little resemblance of mortality in her countenance and complexion, save the fallow hue of sickness, she smiled on Edelfrida; but there was an anguish struggling with gratitude to her kind attendant, and resignation to the will of Heaven, which cut the feeling Edelfrida to the soul; she was even compelled to retire and weep. For many days Mrs. Villers remained in a state of such extreme debility, that the sound of a foot-step or a voice, above the lowest whisper, almost annihilated her; still Edelfrida lived in her room, and, with a gentleness peculiar to herself, performed the office of nurse. At length the pains which had been taken to raise the hapless daughter of calamity from the grave, so far succeeded, as to allow her to be moved out of her bed, and be laid upon a sofa in the dressing-room, as a little change of

air, for she was still too weak to bear the
 motion of a carriage; an inclination for
 nourishment returned, and Mrs. Villers
 appeared slowly to recover. "My kind,
 "my soothing friend," said she to Edel-
 frida, who sat by her side at work, "I
 "can never repay your goodness, should
 "my life be extended beyond the limits
 "of mortality; as it is, the little space
 "Heaven is pleased to assign me, is al-
 "together insufficient to prove my grati-
 "tude in; you, however, who have a
 "heart to feel so exquisitely, will derive
 "pleasure from the reflection of having
 "blessed the last days of an unfortunate
 "friend, with the tenderness which alone
 "could solace her griefs: I have a boy,
 "who, though torn from his mother's
 "arms by dire necessity and misfortune,
 "is yet fostered by one, whose soul is the
 "fountain of truth and virtue; to him, to
 "this child of sorrow, I mean to tell of
 "your unwearied kindness and compas-
 "sion, and if he is possessed of a single spark
 " of

“of thy exalted generous spirit!—Oh,
 “Dormer!” cried she, raising her streaming eyes to Heaven, “he will, with grateful, manly sensibility, discharge the debt
 “his mother has here contracted:” she pressed Edelfrida’s hand with fervour as she spoke.

“Dormer!” repeated Edelfrida, in amaze, “Is it then the ill-fated Louisa
 “to whom I speak?”—“The wretched,
 “undone Louisa!” cried Mrs. Villers, gasping for breath, “it is, who lies
 “before you.” Edelfrida leaned against the arm of the sofa on which her almost expiring friend reclined, without being able to move or speak for above a minute; a sudden chillness ran through her veins, and all her faculties were for the time suspended in silent horror. A mournful dying accent, as she thought it, recalled her to herself, and she ran hastily for some assistance, terrified at the alarming situation into which Mrs. Villers had fallen: she was soon, however, brought

to herself, and Edelfrida, struggling to appear composed, resumed her seat. "Pardon me," said Mrs. Villers, when the attendants were gone again, "pardon me for thus harrowing up your feelings, it is evermore my fate to wound the bosoms of my dearest friends."—"My dear Mrs. Villers," cried Edelfrida, earnestly, "do not harass yourself, never mind me, I am able to bear any thing; you, however, are not, and therefore do not talk, I conjure you."—"My gentle friend," replied she, "you must indulge me, I have but a little time allowed to speak of past events; and since death only can banish them from my memory, suffer me to ask, and fear not to answer me, how the sorrows of the ill-fated Louisa, as you too justly term me, came to your knowledge."—"I had the pleasure," returned Edelfrida, sighing, "to pass a short time in the house of Mrs. Conway,"—"The amiable sister of Dormer," cried Mrs. Villers, interrupting

rupting her.—“ Yes,” said Edelfrida,
 “ that lady honoured me with her friend-
 “ ship, and with grief I resigned it, when
 “ compelled to quit London and its neigh-
 “ bourhood ; from her I learnt the story
 “ of those misfortunes which had invol-
 “ ved not only the generous Dormer, but
 “ the woman of his affections, in mi-
 “ fery.”—“ Misery, indeed !” exclaimed
 she, “ misery which the cold grave
 “ can alone extinguish !” —“ Ere I
 “ knew you,” resumed Edelfrida, “ or
 “ ere I had the most remote idea of
 “ knowing you, I had wept over your
 “ wrongs, and over the letter by which
 “ you consigned your son to Mr. Dor-
 “ mer’s care : with Mrs. Conway I shed
 “ a torrent of tears to the afflictions which
 “ had doomed you both to mourn through
 “ life ; for, believe me, Dormer is no less
 “ the victim of internal grief, than you are,
 “ yourself, my unhappy friend—still he
 “ loves and still laments your fate.”—“ Oh,
 L 5 “ Dormer !”

"Dormer!" cried Mrs. Villers, clasping
 her hands together, in an ecstasy of pain
 and enthusiastic tenderness; "hard, indeed,
 " was the fortune which tore me from
 " thy protecting arms! severe the trial
 " to both—bitter the cup of affliction I
 " have drank to the very dregs, but no-
 " thing, neither time nor madness could
 " efface thy image from my soul! Next
 " to the eternally just and merciful Power
 " who bade me suffer, thou dwellest in
 " my heart, and my last sigh shall be
 " heaved for thee—for myself, I shall now
 " soon be at peace." She paused several
 minutes, during which time her lips ap-
 peared to move, while her heart was of-
 fering a silent fervent prayer to the throne
 of mercy; then turning to Edelfrida,
 she resumed the melancholy conversation;
 and as she began to speak, a faint glow
 rested on her pallid cheek: "I mean
 " to petition my brother," said she, "to
 " grant me one request ere I close my
 " weary eyes in the sleep of death; it is
 " to

“ to let me embrace my boy, and take my
 “ eternal leave of Dormer : once more to
 “ see and speak to him will be a gratifi-
 “ cation beyond any I could experience
 “ in this world. Do you think, my kind
 “ Edelfrida, he will grant it ? Will he,
 “ for this once, lay aside the rigid moni-
 “ tor, the pious and severe, the grave and
 “ sanctified father, whose instructions are
 “ intended to banish all worldly ideas from
 “ the mind, and resume the affectionate
 “ friend and brother, who can pity the
 “ weakness of an unhappy sister, and in-
 “ dulse her for a moment in a wish ab-
 “ stracted from Heaven ? ” — “ I think,”
 replied Edelfrida, “ he cannot refuse.”

She felt herself, that had the appeal been
 made to her, let the consequence be what
 it might, she should not have had resolu-
 tion to deny a request made under such
 circumstances, by one whose sole ray of
 earthly comfort depended upon it : she
 therefore concluded Mr. Medway would
 immediately send for Dormer, who, she

knew, would instantly come on the summons; and she began to cheer even herself with the prospect of seeing a long absent and esteemed friend, to whom it might be in her power to offer some small consolation, in her friendship and attention to his beloved though dying Louisa. "Go, then," cried Mrs. Villers, "my best friend, and seek my brother; tell him the earnest request of his poor Louisa, and conjure him with your own persuasive sweetness of voice, to grant it, as he would cheer her dying hour."—"I will," replied Edelfrida, "convey to Mr. Medway your wish, and I hope I shall be able to bring you a favourable answer." She then called in one of the women, who attended in the next room, and went herself in search of Mr. Medway, who, she was informed, was with his young nephews in the library. Thither, then, she bent her steps, and gently rapped at the door, one of the boys instantly opened it, saying, "It is Miss Dudley, Sir," and seizing

seizing her by the hand, kindly attempted to lead her forward.—“Is not Mr. Medway too busy to admit me?” said she. “Not at all,” replied he, rising from his seat, and advancing towards her, as she hung back, fearful of intruding. “I am always at leisure to receive your commands; perhaps you would wish to speak to me alone? Shall I send the boys away?”—“You, Sir,” returned she, “may not chuse, perhaps, to hear my petition before any witnesses; therefore, if you please, they had better go.” Glad to escape, even for a few minutes, the boys were not tardy in departing, and Edelfrida presently found herself alone with Mr. Medway. “Now, Miss Dudley may present her petition,” said he, smiling: he then added, more gravely, “I hope to find it such a one as I may with pleasure and propriety grant.”—“I sincerely hope so, Sir,” replied she, rather afraid of beginning the subject.—“May I not believe,” said he, taking her hand
with

with an air of kindness, intended to encourage her to proceed, "that your wishes
 "are too reasonable to incur the mortifi-
 "cation of denial, as far as it is in my
 "power to render them propitious; you
 "know how far that power extends, and
 "therefore, I trust, will not tax it beyond
 "what it can go, in justice to the engage-
 "ments I have entered into."—"For
 "myself, Sir," returned she, sighing, "I
 "have nothing to ask, it is for Mrs. Vil-
 "lers I am to entreat your kind indul-
 "gence."—"For my sister, for my poor
 "Louisa!" he exclaimed, "What can
 "she ask, which she need fear to be re-
 "fused! her earthly prospects are closing
 "fast; can I then brighten the lessening
 "scene with any act of friendship and in-
 "dulgence, and shall I not joyfully do it?
 "Tell me what is her demand."—"She
 "wishes," said Edelfrida, "to embrace her
 "son."—"I will send for him instantly,"
 replied he.—"Yet more, Sir," resumed
 Edelfrida, "she would see Mr. Dormer
 "ere

"ere she dies." He looked irresolute for
 a moment, then said, "she shall be gra-
 "tified; but say, Miss Dudley, has she
 "told you her sad story!"—"No, Sir,"
 replied Edelfrida, "I had heard it all from
 "Mrs. Conway, ere I knew Mrs. Vil-
 "lers."—"Mrs. Conway is your friend
 "then?" returned he.—"Yes, Sir, she
 "is," said Edelfrida.—"Mr. Dormer
 "you know too?"—"I do, very well,"
 replied she; "I have experienced from
 "him many tokens of regard and friend-
 "ship, and shall be very happy in an op-
 "portunity of clearing myself from the
 "imputation of ingratitude, which a long
 "and unavoidable silence, on my part,
 "to his sister, may have laid me under."
 Mr. Medway was gravely silent for some
 time, at length he spoke: "On one con-
 "dition, I will send for Mr. Dormer, but
 "that not complied with, my poor suffer-
 "ing sister must be denied her request."—
 "Any condition you propose, will, I dare
 "say, Sir, meet with Mrs. Villers's con-
 "currence,"

"currence," said Edelfrida.—"But it
 "must first meet with your's," replied
 he, gravely.—"Name it, then," cried
 she, with alacrity; "if it is in my power,
 "be assured of succeeding."—"You tell
 "me," he returned, "that Mrs. Conway
 "and her brother are your friends, Miss
 "Dudley."—Edelfrida bowed assent, and
 he proceeded.—"I am sorry then to say,
 "you must not see Mr. Dormer, or he
 "must not enter this house."—"Not see
 "him!" exclaimed Edelfrida, in surprise.
 "—No," said he, "not see him; I gave
 "my word to Lady Osmond, that you
 "should see no person under this roof, of
 "whom you had any former knowledge,
 "any more than you should write or re-
 "ceive letters from your friends, unless
 "you permitted me to inspect them, and
 "likewise to inclose them to some friend
 "in London, that the post mark should
 "not give any clue to your retirement."
 A glow of resentment tinged her cheek,
 as she replied: "I did not know I was
 "your

"your prisoner, Sir."—"It grieves me
 "to wound you thus," said he, "but I
 "must fulfil my promise, and perform my
 "duty. Can you, or can you not allow
 "your dying friend the indulgence she
 "asks from me? Shall Mr. Dormer enter
 "Rushworth Abbey, and depart again,
 "without knowing you are one of its in-
 "habitants?" Greatly as Edelfrida felt
 herself offended and hurt by this prohibi-
 tion, no sooner was the supplicating figure
 of her dying friend recalled to her mind,
 than struggling with her own sensations,
 she said, "Mrs. Villers shall not be wound-
 "ed through me, whatever I may suffer.
 "Send then, Sir, for Mr. Dormer, and
 "rely upon my word that I will not ask to
 "see him."—"Generously, nobly re-
 "solved," cried he, "soon and amply
 may you be rewarded for this compassio-
 nate self-denial."—"You, Sir, are ever
 "just, though severe," replied she, endea-
 vouring to conquer her chagrin; "and to
 "cure the pain you inflict, are ready to
 "give

“ give me credit for more than I deserve;
 “ think, however, no more of me, but
 “ send for Mr. Dormer.”—“ I will,” he
 answered, “ I will write to him immedi-
 “ ately, and in the mean time I must still
 “ farther trespass on you, to guard Lou-
 “ isa from all mention of your name be-
 “ fore him, otherwise her gratitude will
 “ be pouring forth your praises in his ear,
 “ and your being excluded from the sa-
 “ tisfaction of seeing him out of confide-
 “ ration to her, be of no avail.”—“ ’Tis
 “ hard to make me plead against myself,”
 returned she, “ but since it must be so,
 “ I will rigidly obey your commands.”—
 “ Call them my entreaties,” said he, “ and
 “ receive for your compliance my sin-
 “ cere acknowledgements and warmest
 “ approbation.”—“ You pay high,” cried
 she, attempting to smile.—“ I pay but
 “ the value of the purchase,” said he,
 “ who offers less is unjust.”—

Edelfrida now returned to Mrs. Villers,
 to whom, as much as possible, she tried
 to

to lessen the sacrifice she was making to her, but not so Mrs. Villers received it, she even would have given up seeing Dormer, rather than mortify her; but Edelfrida positively declared against her refusing herself this gratification, and after a kind contest between them, Mrs. Villers consented to accept this additional favour from her generous friend. Lady Rushworth was made acquainted with her sister's request and Mr. Medway's compliance, to all which she gave a cold assent, ordering an apartment to be prepared for the expected guest, who, there was no doubt, would set off instantly on the receipt of such a summons. "Well," said Edelfrida when she was alone, "Dormer may, perhaps, hereafter know that I am not ungrateful for his former friendship; how far and wide," she continued, "does Lady Osmond's baneful influence extend? I now, indeed, feel myself the victim of her power."——

From

From the day on which Mr. Medway wrote to invite Mr. Dormer to Rushworth Abbey, to the moment of his arrival, Edelfrida dedicated to Mrs. Villers, nor allowed herself to murmur at the promise she had in some sort been compelled to make, not to see the friend she most anxiously wished to convince of the purity of her conduct, by explaining the motives of it, while she beheld the satisfaction the expected interview diffused over the dead white of her dying friend's complexion. "Next to Heaven," Mrs. Villers often in the course of the day repeated, next "to Heaven, my child and Dormer are "most dear to me; next to them, my generous, kind Edelfrida; nor will I die "without leaving a testimony of my gratitude to you to be given to my poor "boy, that he may know the claim you "have upon him; if I must not speak of "you to Dormer, I will never cease to "pray for you fervently; ardently will I "pray for your happiness, which, though
"for

“ for a while clouded, will shine with re-
 “ doubled brightness when this transient
 “ gloom has passed over.”—“ When I
 “ think of your sufferings,” replied Edel-
 frida, “ my own seem trivial in the com-
 “ parison; and yet, my patient friend,
 “ my heart but ill sustains a separation
 “ from its idol, from its too, too well be-
 “ loved Osmond; teach me then, I con-
 “ jure you, to bear this trial as you have
 “ done far greater ones; teach me to sub-
 “ due the rebellious sensations which ba-
 “ nish peace from my bosom; for while
 “ thus I languish out my days in hopeless
 “ sorrow, Osmond, perhaps, dissipates his
 “ regrets in an endless round of pleasures,
 “ and forgets the wretched Edelfrida.”—
 “ No, my dear Edelfrida,” replied Mrs.
 Villers, moved to tears by this first com-
 plaint, “ no, think not so meanly of
 “ Lord Osmond, and let the pains taken
 “ to prevent his discovering you, con-
 “ vince you that he remembers you with
 “ an affection equal to your own; trust
 “ me

“me some kind accident will restore you
 “to each other; lament not, then, the
 “little time you have spent in this soli-
 “tude, in this sad and melancholy soli-
 “tude, since the close of an unhappy life
 “has been rendered comparatively blessed
 “by your presence.”—“I will not lament
 “it then,” said she, wiping away her tears,
 and pressing Mrs. Villers’s hand to her
 bosom, “I will rather rejoice that my fate
 “ordained me a part in life, from which,
 “on reflection, I can derive so pure a sa-
 “tisfaction.”——

As the time of Mr. Dormer’s being
 expected at Rushworth Abbey drew near,
 Mrs. Villers seemed to undergo an inter-
 nal struggle; she became weaker too,
 and her dissolution appeared to be at hand.
 Edelfrida also suffered both for herself
 and her friend the most excruciating
 pangs; she knew not that when she left
 her over night, she should find her alive in
 the morning; and she concluded that the
 interview with Dormer, though so anxi-
 ously

ously desired, would reduce her to the grave. She was sitting at dinner with Lady Rushworth and Mr. Medway, when a servant gave a note to the latter, which having read, he turned first to his sister, saying, "I wish, Lady Rushworth, you would undertake the office of preparing Louisa for Mr. Dormer's arrival, he will be here in less than an hour; Miss Dudley," added he, addressing Edelfrida, "mindful of her promise, will allow me to conduct her to an apartment at the other end of the house, where her residence will be as retired as though she was not under the same roof with us; this confinement will not be of long duration, for I shall not permit my poor sister to waste her now very precious moments on temporal concerns, after she has embraced her boy, and cleared herself in the opinion of the man, whose generous attachment merits this return on her part."—"I would by no means question your
 "judge.

“judgement,” said Lady Rushworth to
 her brother, “but in my humble opinion
 “it would have been really kinder to
 “have refused this request of Louisa’s; I
 “fear it will agitate her, and withdraw
 “her ideas from that subject it is fit they
 “should now be fixed upon.”—“I knew
 “not how to refuse her,” replied he,
 “when I considered her sufferings, and
 “how short a time she had to be sensible
 “of kindness or otherwise.”—“I know
 “your indulgence sprang from a good
 “motive,” said her Ladyship, “but she
 “ought not to have desired it; her son,
 “she might have supposed, was as well
 “situated as he possibly could be, where
 “she had placed him herself, regardless of
 “his future welfare; why, then, should
 “she wish to encourage those emotions
 “the sight of him may create in her
 “mind? And for my part, I look upon
 “her anxiety to see Captain Dormer, as
 “little less than criminal; I own, I am
 “surprised at your permitting it.”—
 “Lady

“ Lady Rushworth,” returned he, rather sternly, “ you have not been called upon
 “ to the trials which Louisa has sustained,
 “ patiently sustained ; you can form no
 “ idea, therefore, of the misery she has
 “ endured for so many tedious years : but
 “ as a woman and a sister, I expected
 “ that you should have shewn some pity
 “ and indulgence to weakness, which human nature, in its highest state of perfection, is ever liable to : it would have
 “ been neither unbecoming your sex, nor
 “ the truly Christian profession of our
 “ Holy Faith.” — “ I am sorry,” replied she, “ that you should think me deficient in
 “ compassion for Louisa ; I only meant
 “ to have saved her from farther anguish,
 “ which she is yet too susceptible of, not
 “ to have inflicted any additional sorrow
 “ on her.” — “ I beg your pardon,” returned he, recovering himself, “ I was too
 “ warm in my reply.” —

CHAPTER LII.

EDELFRIDA, who had listened to the reproach Mr. Medway had been surprised into by Lady Rushworth's ill-timed severity to poor Mrs. Villers, with secret satisfaction, now rose to accompany him to those apartments, which were to be her prison during Mr. Dormer's stay at Rushworth Abbey. She did not ask first to see her friend, for she justly conjectured that her emotions increasing every moment, would reduce her to a state she had better avoid witnessing for her own sake, as she was herself too little composed to make any great exertions. Sorrowfully, then, she followed Mr. Medway to the north wing of the Abbey, where she was, for awhile, to be secluded; on entering a room which joined that she was to sleep in, she found a musical instrument, and a small

small collection of books, which had been carefully selected for her amusement. "Here," said Mr. Medway, "I hope you will be able to pass your time tolerably; I ordered the piano forte to be brought here; and these books, if you will peruse them, are such as you may extract both profit and pleasure from."—"I thank you, Sir," she replied, "but my mind is out of tune for music, and I am incapable of reading with attention."—"My dear Miss Dudley," returned he, "let me entreat you not to indulge reflections of a nature to injure your peace here, and, perhaps, hereafter; your sensations are too exquisite, whether of joy or sorrow; they unfit you for rational and probable happiness here, and totally exclude that calm, sober, necessary preparation for a life, where the felicity or the misery allotted us will be permanent, and, therefore, 'tis our interest, as well as our duty, to look forward continually to it."—"The

“longer I live,” cried Edelfrida, sigh-
 ing from the bottom of her heart, “the
 “less likely, I fear, I shall be to procure
 “for myself hereafter the felicity promised
 “to that pure virtue, which is the result
 “of well-governed passions and affections;
 “if you can instruct me to silence, to sub-
 “due feelings which serve only to tor-
 “ment, I will thank you most sincere-
 “ly.”—While she spoke, the trembling
 agitation of her whole frame proved how
 difficult the task would be; Mr. Med-
 way sighed at this picture of human frail-
 ty, and a servant at that instant coming
 to tell him Mr. Dormer was arrived, he
 had no time to reply, nor, indeed, could
 Edelfrida have listened to him; for at the
 intelligence she started, and instantly co-
 vering her eyes with her hands, burst
 forth into the most impassioned agony of
 tears. In this forlorn and melancholy
 situation she found herself alone, when
 she recovered recollection sufficient to
 know where she was; a servant came with

tea soon after; she hastily swallowed some, her mouth being parched with grief, and her spirits entirely exhausted with weeping. From this time till the supper hour she sat immoveable, thinking, with an almost breaking heart, of her fate, and casting a sad retrospective view on her past life, the whole of which her imagination comprised within the little space of twelve months. “At the beginning of this sorrowful period,” she said to herself, “I had a father careful to protect me from misfortune; shortly he died, and I became an orphan: ah, fatal blow to my peace! all that follows is a succession of excruciating joys, which passed away as soon as felt; griefs, of much longer duration, and alternate hopes and fears, which have soothed and agonized me by turns; now all is over, all is fixed, and I am wretched for life.”——

The attention Lady Rushworth was ever careful not to omit, provided for the

sequestered Edelfrida, a supper at the usual hour, of which, however, she could not touch a morsel, and it was by her desire instantly carried away again. She then retired to bed, weary of herself, and thinking every change must be for the better: but she soon found that she could not close her eyes; she was anxious to know how Mrs. Villers had borne her interview with Mr. Dormer and her child, yet she could gain no information on the subject; for no person had been near her of whom she could ask with any hope of obtaining a satisfactory answer, for she knew the servants who waited on her were wholly ignorant of what was going forward at the other end of the house; she was, therefore, compelled to endure the restless impatience it was impossible to gratify, along with the many other painful ideas which crowded fast on her mind, among the first of which, was her apprehensions of an eternal separation from Lord Osmond, and her fears lest, in
their

their absence from each other, he should yield himself to the necessity his mother urged, of forgetting her, and bestowing his hand, at least, on some other woman. "That," she exclaimed, as she lay almost convulsed with the thought, "that blow would, indeed, be fatal to me! I could not survive it a single day! I would not wish to survive it a single hour!"—Towards morning, quite fatigued and worn out, she fell asleep for a short time, but waked, little refreshed and not less unhappy, for the instant her eyes were opened, every image of sorrow rushed into her mind again, and in this state she passed the first part of the day: in the evening Mr. Medway once more visited her, and beheld, with evident concern, the paleness and dejection of her countenance, and the unusual deadness of her eyes; he kindly accosted her with friendly inquiries, which her looks but too well replied to; yet it was necessary to break the silence which, in certain cases, becomes painfully

distressing. "How is Mrs. Villers, Sir?" she exclaimed with eagerness,—“Better than I had dared to hope she would be,” replied he, “and I know when I tell you of the relief she has experienced from a conversation with Mr. Dormer, you will not regret your kindness to her on this, as well as on every other occasion.”—“I can never regret having contributed in any degree to her peace,” said Edelfrida, “be assured, Sir; but,” resumed she, after a moment’s pause, “though I may not see Mr. Dormer, there can, I hope, be no impropriety in asking how he sustained himself under such trying circumstances.”—“Indeed,” replied Mr. Medway, “I should find it a difficult and distressing task to describe the feelings of a man, who having loved, like Mr. Dormer, is, after a long separation, once more brought into the presence of the woman he too fondly doats upon, but half assured that she has not voluntarily
“ in-

"injured him, yet ready to sacrifice his
 "existence to prove her innocent; ima-
 "gine, for I cannot paint the scene;
 "think of her scarcely mortal appear-
 "ance; behold him struggling with
 "manly firmness and exquisite sensibility,
 "to approach her with composure, but
 "in vain; she seemed to expire at the
 "sight of him; then, forgetful of all past
 "events, he flew, he clasped her in his
 "arms, and the big tears chased one ano-
 "ther rapidly down his burning cheeks,
 "while his eyes eagerly dwelt upon her
 "death-like and inanimate features; he
 "groaned forth the name of Louisa, as
 "on his knees he supported her lifeless
 "form; at length she revived, and cast
 "her languid eyes upon him, crying,
 "—'Oh, Dormer, pity my weakness and
 "bear with my infirmities, for a little
 "longer and all will be over.'—Dormer
 "could not reply; the tears now gushed
 "forth without restraint, and releasing
 "Louisa to Lady Rushworth's and my
 M 5. care.

" care, he covered his face, and ceased
 " to contend with his emotions any lon-
 " ger : having thus freely indulged them,
 " he resumed some shew of calmness, and
 " once more drew near my poor sister.
 " ' Louisa !' said he, in a broken voice,
 " ' Louisa ! do we, then, meet as friends
 " who have mourned each other's absence
 " bitterly, severely mourned it ?'—' Hea-
 " ven knows,' replied she, ' how bitterly,
 " how severely I have mourned it ! but
 " we shall part in peace, I trust, and all
 " will, then, be well.'—' Talk not of part
 " ing, my Louisa,' he exclaimed, ' ere we
 " are scarcely met, what is there shall ever
 " part us more ?'—' Alas, my friend !'
 " said she, ' Death ! that powerful and
 " irresistible, that, to some, terrific ene-
 " my, to others, welcome friend ; death
 " will part us ; do you not read his sum-
 " mons in my face ? Do you not perceive
 " his mandate is gone forth, by this poor,
 " fragile, altered form ? And why should
 " either of us regard his sentence as severe
 " or

" or ill-timed? Believe me, Dormer, I
 " rejoice in it; you must not grieve;
 " hear what I have suffered, and bless the
 " moment of my dissolution as the hap-
 " piest of my being; be convinced of
 " my innocence, and I shall die content-
 " ed.'—' I do, I do believe it;' returned
 " he, ' and, therefore, I wish not to sur-
 " vive you.'—' Would you, then, desert
 " the charge I have committed to you,
 " Dormer?' replied Louisa, ' Would you
 " leave my poor boy after having been a
 " father to him?'—' While I do live,
 " Louisa,' he exclaimed, ' I will still be a
 " father to him, and when I die, he shall
 " find that I have remembered him as
 " my son.'—' I cannot thank you, but
 " Heaven will,' she said.—She then
 " proceeded to unfold the unhappy events
 " of her life, which, as she proceeded
 " slowly, from weakness and agitation, by
 " turns drew the fire of resentment and
 " the drops of sorrow from Dormer's eyes:
 " he was on the point of cursing the vi-

“lain who had so wronged him in the
 “person of his beloved Louisa; she
 “checked the utterance of the fearful im-
 “precation, by a well-timed gentle ad-
 “monition, and he blessed her for the re-
 “proof; for on reflection, he has a soul
 “superior to revenge, and though wri-
 “thing beneath the anguish of this deadly
 “wound to his happiness, he wished to
 “leave the punishment of such crimes
 “to that Power who has only a right to
 “inflict it, and, indeed, can now only
 “inflict it; for the mouldering remains
 “of that unhappy wretch are insensible to
 “all human rage or resentment. In or-
 “der to relieve the feelings this calami-
 “tous relation had caused, I now intro-
 “duced to Louisa her son, who greatly
 “resembles her in features and figure, al-
 “lowing for the want of her delicacy,
 “which our sex do not possess. She fold-
 “ed him in her arms with all a mother’s
 “fondness, and the tears she shed over
 “him, I was happy to observe, were less
 “bit-

“ bitter than any she has wept since her
 “ misfortunes commenced: both she and
 “ Dormer became, by degrees, more
 “ tranquil, and we staid with her as long
 “ as she was able to support herself: the
 “ rest of the evening Mr. Dormer was
 “ almost totally silent and melancholy;
 “ he attended little to any thing that was
 “ said, but sat with his arm over the poor
 “ boy’s chair, who wept incessantly at the
 “ idea of a mother just found, and so soon
 “ to be lost for ever to him; this sensibi-
 “ lity seemed grateful to the heart of Dor-
 “ mer, he watched the tears as they start-
 “ ed, but never attempted to check
 “ them.” — “ Dear boy!” exclaimed
 Edelfrida, “ I love thee, though unseen,
 “ for this tribute of affectionate sorrow
 “ to an angelic parent.” — “ I hope,” said
 Mr. Medway, “ it is an earnest of good
 “ dispositions, yet would I not encourage
 “ it in him, or any other friend. I should
 “ not have entered so minutely as I have
 “ done into what has passed between poor
 “ Louisa

“ Louisa and Mr. Dormer, nor, indeed,
 “ when I began, did I intend it ; but ho-
 “ ping to divert your thoughts from your-
 “ self, and insensibly led on by the inte-
 “ resting subject, I fear I have been
 “ guilty of creating emotions in your
 “ heart, rather than, as I must ever wish,
 “ assisting you to calm them.”—“ Who,
 “ Sir,” cried Edelfrida, “ can listen un-
 “ moved to such a tale of woe ? If any
 “ can, what would be your opinion of
 “ their hearts ?” —“ I own,” said he,
 “ that they must be cold and senseless ;
 “ such misfortunes demand the tear of
 “ pity, but they also demand a pious and
 “ humble resignation to the Power who
 “ allowed them for some wise purpose to
 “ be inflicted.” —“ Wise, no doubt,” re-
 “ plied she, “ but hard and difficult to en-
 “ dure.” —“ The more glorious the tri-
 “ umph of enduring them then,” returned
 he, “ where would be the merit of pa-
 “ tience if it never met a trial ?” —“ Few
 “ people, I fancy,” said Edelfrida, “ but
 “ what,

“ what, in the course of their lives, meet
 “ trials full severe enough for their con-
 “ stancy to sustain.”—“ Few people,” he
 answered, “ exert themselves or their con-
 “ stancy in virtue, when called upon by
 “ adversity to quit their favourite pursuits
 “ or darling objects of enjoyment; they
 “ yield themselves the prey of melancholy
 “ and despondency, and in the end merit
 “ the fate they might otherwise have ren-
 “ dered far less unhappy.”—“ The les-
 “ sons you inculcate are just,” said Edel-
 frida, “ but not easily learnt: to practise
 “ them, is a task too arduous for me, I
 “ fear.”—“ Do not fear it, and you will
 “ not find it so;” he replied—She shook
 her head in silence. He then told her
 that Mr. Dormer, in compliance with Mrs.
 Villers’s request, was to leave Rushworth
 Abbey the day after the next, along with
 his young charge; “ You will then, Miss
 “ Dudley, be released,” said he, “ and
 “ Louisa herself shall thank you for your
 “ kindness to her.”—The time which
 Mr.

Mr. Dormer was yet to spend under the same roof with Edelfrida, passed slowly and heavily on, but when the hour of his departure came, and all hope of seeing him, speaking to him, or informing him of what had befallen her since they last parted, was extinguished; she more bitterly than ever lamented her wayward destiny, which thus robbed her of every consolation under the weight of misfortunes she was scarcely able to endure, even had the alleviations of friendship and the society she preferred been secured to her; her heart died within her as she heard the sound of the carriage which conveyed Mr. Dormer and his adopted son away from the Abbey; she listened attentively as to the last feeble murmur of hope which was ever to reach her ear, and when she could distinguish it no more, she threw herself down in a transport of despair, and lay prostrate bewailing her fate till Mr. Medway came to re-conduct her to a more habitable part of the mansion;

sion; she hastily raised herself on seeing
 him, but looked as if she would have
 asked, "Why do you interrupt me in this
 "sad indulgence of my sorrows?"—
 "My sister," said he, seeming not to re-
 mark the situation in which he found her,
 "my sister is impatient for your presence;
 "suffer me, then, Miss Dudley, to con-
 "duct you to her apartment; but pre-
 "pare yourself, ere you see her, to behold
 "a great change, three days have brought
 "her so near the grave, that the slightest
 "emotion may precipitate her into it, in
 "an instant; indeed, she seems to linger
 "here for no purpose now but to solicit
 "Heaven for a quiet passage to eternity,
 "and to tell you, how much she feels
 "your goodness to her."—From what
 Mr. Medway said, Edelfrida immediately
 concluded that Mrs. Villers was within an
 hour of departing this life at most, she,
 therefore, impatiently prepared herself to
 accompany him into her room, that she
 might not arrive too late to hear the voice
 of

of her friend once more; forgetting her own griefs, she thought only of Mrs. Villers, and though her steps were tottering, she hastened to leave the place where, a minute before, she wished to be left to herself. Mr. Medway offered her his arm, which she accepted readily, for, indeed, she was but just able to sustain her own weight, so much had her constant sorrow and want of appetite, weakened her in the course of three days and a half, which she had lived, secluded from the family; at length, with the support, she reached Mrs. Villers's apartment once again, she stopped short at the door of it to recover herself a little, and to compose the agitation of spirits which might render her unfit for the last solemn scene of death; it appeared to be her fate so soon to witness. "I grieve," said Mr. Medway, "to expose you to so many trials."—"Think not of me," she replied, in a low tremulous voice, "let Mrs. Villers now engage all your care and attention; let
" us

“ us go into the room, I hope I shall not
 “ disturb her serenity, I will try to com-
 “ mand myself, be assured, Sir.”—“ I
 “ thank you for the kind effort,” return-
 ed he, “ Louisa will thank you too ;”
 saying this, he opened the door and they
 entered.—

CHAPTER LIII.

MRS. Villers was sitting in an arm chair supported by pillows, a ghastly paleness overspread her face, a piercing keenness darted from her eyes, and every other feature was edged with the sharpness of approaching dissolution; she breathed with difficulty, and one of her hands, which hung over the arm of the chair, seemed already cold, wan, and lifeless. Edelfrida gazed on her with a countenance which expressed neither hope nor fear; a settled sadness pervaded every line of it; she shed not a tear; she heaved not a sigh; yet her bosom was oppressed with a weight, which only those who have experienced similar sensations can form a just idea of. On beholding her, however, Mrs. Villers was instantly struck with the alteration

alteration which appeared through her whole figure ; and while she saw her draw near with a pleasure in her presence, she felt a sudden damp to it, from perceiving how greatly she had suffered, written in such strong characters over her whole person. Edelfrida no sooner found herself in the room, than she quickened her pace to receive the hand her dying friend had extended to her, the moment she entered : they could not, however, either of them speak for above a minute ; at length Mrs. Villers broke silence, “ My best friend,” she exclaimed, “ my excellent, generous
 “ Edelfrida, I owe you more than I can
 “ express—much more than I could ever
 “ hope to pay, even were your happiness
 “ in my keeping ; for you have given me
 “ the means of calming every apprehen-
 “ sion, removing every doubt, soothing
 “ every sorrow : yes,” added she, “ Dormer
 “ and I have taken our leave of each
 “ other for ever in this world, but it was a
 “ separation rendered sweet by the hope of
 “ meeting

“ meeting hereafter in perfect security
 “ and confidence : he no longer thinks me
 “ base, perfidious, and abandoned ; he
 “ has wept, it is true, bitterly wept over
 “ my sufferings ; the big tears of manly
 “ tenderness and sorrow have rolled down
 “ his cheeks ; but he has heard, and be-
 “ lieves my innocence ; he has vowed to
 “ cherish a faithful remembrance of me,
 “ and to protect my boy, the dear, though
 “ fatal cause of his mother’s misfor-
 “ tunes. All this I owe to you, my be-
 “ loved friend, and more, much more,
 “ but I will not distress you by speaking
 “ of my obligations, farther than to assure
 “ you, death alone can erase the impres-
 “ sion from my heart.”

The tears now streamed down Edel-
 frida’s face, and proved a most happy re-
 lief to her bosom, which was bursting
 with its numerous sorrows, and almost
 sobbing, she replied to Mrs. Villers, “ I
 “ rejoice if it has been in my power to
 “ to soften, for a single instant, the severe
 “ afflictions

“afflictions you have endured.”—“Far,
 “far more,” cried Mrs. Villers, emphatically, “than a single instant, you have
 “given me peace here on earth, and my
 “spirit shall quit this its mortal habitation
 “in the blessed serenity of hope—in the
 “joyful expectation of future bliss! droop
 “not then, my Edelfrida, I am about to
 “leave you, but I go happy, I die contented;
 “the years I have mourned, seem
 “now like a troublesome dream that is
 “past; Heaven opens to my view, and
 “all before me is bright and enlivening,
 “as all I look back upon hath been dark
 “and gloomy: the days of sorrow are but
 “as a vapour, which obscures for a moment
 “the prospect; that which clouds
 “your’s, will, I trust, be very transient,
 “and, when once dispersed, return no
 “more! May your life to come be marked
 “only with a felicity as pure as the nature
 “of things here on earth will permit; and
 “when the hour of death arrives, may it,
 “like mine, be cheered by some gentle,
 “generous

“generous friend, that it may pass away
 “without one pang!”—Edelfrida pressed
 Mrs. Villers’s hand, in token of her gra-
 titude, but she could not speak, so much
 was she affected by the words, the voice,
 the manner, and the figure of her scarcely
 mortal friend, who paused for want of
 breath to proceed, and fatigued with the
 exertion already made, she sunk back,
 gasping, and almost expiring. The at-
 tendant summoned by Mr. Medway, now
 came, and gave her some drops in water,
 which she drank, and in a few minutes
 revived again, and resumed her discourse.
 “My brother,” said she, “has kindly
 “promised, at a proper time, to make my
 “boy acquainted with the friendship and
 “gratitude he ought ever to feel for his
 “mother’s amiable and beloved friend :
 “it was my purpose to have left a few
 “lines in my own hand-writing, to inform
 “him of what I was forbidden to tell him,
 “ere I took my everlasting leave of him ;
 “but a few lines would not suffice to
 “speak

“ speak of my feelings and obligations,
 “ and to more, I found myself totally
 “ unequal ; indeed, I question whether my
 “ trembling hand would now guide a pen
 “ whilst I wrote my name only.”—She
 looked towards Mr. Medway as she spoke,
 for a confirmation of what she was say-
 ing ; he replied, “ I will not fail to en-
 “ force on the mind of your son, Louisa,
 “ the sentiments due to Miss Dudley’s
 “ friendship, and the obedience he owes your
 “ last injunction.”—“ To me, nothing is
 “ due,” said Edelfrida, “ talk not then of
 “ obligations to me, I entreat ; but if ever
 “ chance should introduce me to your son,
 “ my dear Mrs. Villers, I will love him
 “ for your sake, and he, perhaps, will feel
 “ some regard for me, when he shall
 “ hear the sentiments his mother inspired
 “ me with.”

“ How soothing to maternal tender-
 “ ness,” cried Mrs. Villers, “ is it, to hear
 “ a beloved friend say, *I will love your child!*
 “ I hope mine will be worthy the blessings

“Heaven seems to destine for him.”—Mrs. Villers, though exhausted, and drawing nearer every moment to the grave, could not help thus talking to Edelfrida, who never left her, but sat watching for the awful approach of death: the day, however, and the night, still beheld the victim which the Minister of Fate was about quickly to seize, trembling on this side the grave. The following day came, and she yet breathed amongst the children of mortality it prepared to close; still she lingered, but life was now ebbing apace; a film came across the sight; the heart, which had been so long agitated with misery, now beat, indeed, but its movements were languid and uncertain; Mr. Medway prayed; Edelfrida also kneeling by her side, holding one of her hands between her's, also prayed; Lady Rushworth, devout in principle, rather than in heart, joined in this solemn scene. Mrs. Villers cast a look of pious resignation upwards—then her eyes closed again—once more she opened them,

them, and a smile of angelic sweetness brightened every feature, as she gazed for a second on Edelfrida; the smile rested on her countenance, though the look was past. Mr. Medway hastened to perform that last office to the dying, which his church enjoins. The hand which held the crucifix now fell, still the pulse fluttered, and gave time for the pious ceremony; once again he prayed fervently, devoutly, feelingly, while mildness, tenderness, and affection unmanned his voice, and trembled in his eyes; Edelfrida, with every faculty condensing with grief, as those of her friend were already condensed by the chilling touch of death, still kept her place, uniting in every prayer for the peace of a soul which had been so deeply wounded here, but which was now on the wing for an happier region, where sickness and sorrow are no more, where the thousand nameless causes of pain and grief here, are not suffered to approach, are not remembered, shall never more be felt, but

where all is harmony, joy, and purity,
 permanent, celestial, unfading, and ever
 new.

In this hope Mrs. Villers expired, and
 in the bosom of her friend a murmur rose,
 that she also was not permitted to go too;
 to her the world was worse than a blank,
 and at that instant she had left it with
 pleasure.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE scene being thus closed for ever on Mrs. Villers's mortal peregrination, Edelfrida had no longer any thing to employ her time or interest her feelings at Rushworth Abby; all was dreary, sad, and comfortless, her disposition ill fitted her for a dull vacuum in life, her heart was not formed to endure it; severed from the man she loved with a passion violent, enthusiastic, and romantic as her temper; torn from the society of those friends who might have soothed, though not cured the wounds of her aching mind; she languished day after day, weary of her existence, and out of patience with the uniform coldness of Lady Rushworth's disposition and manners; fatigued with the still sameness of the scene, in which she barely existed,

and inattentive to Mr. Medway's lessons of resignation, fortitude, and submission; lessons which she could not practise, and therefore desired not to hear. The funeral being over, every thing around her resumed its wonted face of composure, and its wonted regularity; the mistress of the house seemed to impart to every object, whether animated or otherwise, the unvarying evenness of her own mind; the domestics might have been automata, the scenery a deception, for, to Edelfrida, they all partook of one common nature, as insupportable, or even more so than her own internal wretchedness. She had never yet strayed beyond the limits of the garden, and that merely for a little air in the cool of the evening, (for it was now in the middle of August) her attendance on Mrs. Villers had so entirely occupied her time since she became a resident at Rushworth Abbey; she had not even been at church, the family never going, she had not as yet gained resolu-

tion

tion to go alone; but as she never attended their devotions in the chapel belonging to the house, and adjoining to it, she now began to turn her thoughts towards once more entering the sacred place where she worshipped her God. On the Sunday then succeeding the interment of her much lamented friend, she expressed a wish to go to church.—“By all means,” replied Mr. Medway, “it is a very short and
 “shady walk; but if you prefer riding,
 “either in a carriage or on horseback,
 “I am certain Lady Rushworth will accommodate you.”—Edelfrida replied,
 “that she chose to walk, and would set out
 “early, that the servant who went to shew
 “her the road, might return in time to
 “attend him at prayers in the chapel.”
 For the first time, then, since she entered them, Edelfrida found herself on the outside the gates of Rushworth Abbey, and having walked in a path, purposely made for foot passengers, through a wood of Sir John Rushworth’s, she reached the church,

which was at the distance of about half a mile; the servant opened the pew door, and she went in to rest herself, and wait the arrival of the clergyman. The rustics, who were gathering round the churchyard, now dropped in one by one to look at her; they had not for years seen any person from the Abbey at church, nor had they in their lives seen any creature, of any condition, so truly lovely, though the splendour of Edelfrida's charms was obscured by grief and the paleness of dejection. At length the clergyman came, and being a young man, with more of the world in his air and appearance than any of his congregation, Edelfrida excepted, it was not wonderful if he exhibited some tokens of surprize on beholding her, even from his reading desk; if his eyes wandered from the book, to the fair stranger; if he became confused, hesitated, lost his place, and recovered himself with difficulty; thus getting through the service in a less devout and graceful manner than he had

had ever done before perhaps: he was the friend of a neighbouring gentleman, who had presented him to the living, and in whose house he had resided since he first did the duty of a parish priest: he had been educated at the university, and was, in all respects, well calculated for the office he performed, being of a serious, thinking turn of mind, and well informed in his professional duties; he was, notwithstanding, surprized out of his accustomed, composed, and grave attention to the subject on which he read and preached. The moment his eyes fell upon Edelfrida, he guessed she came from Rushworth Abbey, by her sitting in the pew belonging to it; but he could scarcely satisfy himself that she was an inhabitant of earth, when he gazed on her face, and felt himself fascinated by the thousand charms which shone upon it: he never delivered his sermon so ill before, and in short, he concluded out of humour with himself, and half in love with the lovely cause of his derangement.

He passed by the seat to indulge himself with a still nearer view of her; he bowed respectfully as he passed, but having no pretence for introducing himself farther, he reluctantly walked on, Edelfrida curtsied, and at that instant the footman came to attend her home again.

As she returned from church, she almost wished for the society of this gentleman; he looked unaffected and sensible, and was the only person she had seen for some time, who appeared at all likely to afford her any relief from the pressure of her own painful reflections, or the fatiguing stupidity in which she lived: she asked the servant his name, "Mr. Ainsdale, Ma'am," he replied.—"Is he a native of this country?" she demanded; "—No, Ma'am, I believe not," and there ended all the information she could get respecting Mr. Ainsdale. She now re-entered Rushworth Abbey, and finding that the dinner hour interfered with the hour of church for the afternoon, she
was

was obliged to relinquish the idea of going again till the following Sunday: in the mean time, however, she resolved to explore the walks within a mile or two of the house, in hopes that chance would favour her with some employment for her thoughts, better than poring over her work, in company with Lady Rushworth, whose conversation was cold and uninteresting as her mind. In the evening, then, as soon as it was cool enough to walk, her Ladyship, accompanied by her children, invited Edelfrida to join them on the terrace, from which they seldom strayed, but she declined the invitation, saying, half laughing, "Since I have lost the reality of freedom, the semblance is become more dear to me, therefore I will stroll into the wood a little way, that I may feel myself unconstrained by walls and gates."—"Will you venture alone, Miss Dudley?" replied Lady Rushworth, with the grave airs she always dressed her features in, when she disapproved

proved any proposal. "Oh, yes," said Edelfrida, "I have no fears."—"I wish you a pleasant walk, Ma'am, then," replied her Ladyship, curtsying, and immediately left the room, with her family, who all of them longed to have been of Edelfrida's party, so much did the sweetness and good nature of her manners engage them; and so pleasant is the liberty seldom or ever tasted in idea, far pleasanter than in the possession. But their mother's rigid ideas of propriety never yielded to their inclinations; Edelfrida was therefore left to walk alone; for Mr. Medway was gone to visit a sick man who lived at some distance. The middle of the day had been very hot, the evening was peculiarly fine and pleasant, a gentle breeze just fanned the leaves with a refreshing coolness; the country was irregular and romantic, immediately round Rushworth Abbey, and Edelfrida was soothed with the scene, while she ranged at large, as she

as she pleased, along the side of a stream, which watered the neighbouring grounds; she pursued the path for above a mile, which taking a sudden turning, brought her out near an old house, whose appearance denoted former grandeur, though now it was in many parts totally decayed, and altogether strongly marked by the injuries of time, yet one side of it was still habitable; and as she stood contemplating its antiquity, she perceived people passing in and out, who looked like farmers and their servants; she therefore concluded it belonged to some family who had long since deserted it, and turned it over to the tenant, who cultivated the adjoining lands, as a residence. While these ideas, respecting this ancient mansion, occupied her mind, two females came out of a little door, which seemed to lead from the garden into the road where she was: the one was middle aged, and of no striking appearance; the other was young and very beautiful; they looked

looked surprized, so was Edelfrida; and feeling it no longer civil to stand still and survey them and their habitation, she moved again towards home, not a little curious to know who these ladies were, that lived so near, yet had never been mentioned at Rushworth Abbey; for though Lady Rushworth neither paid nor received visits during the first year of her mourning for her husband, there was something extraordinary in the reserve of banishing from both the house and conversation the inhabitants of a mansion so contiguous as that was which Edelfrida had accidentally discovered: she met no one from whom she could learn its name, nor the name of its possessors; nor could she by any means gratify the natural curiosity the unexpected sight of a lovely and elegant female in that retired part of the country had excited.

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END OF VOL. III.

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